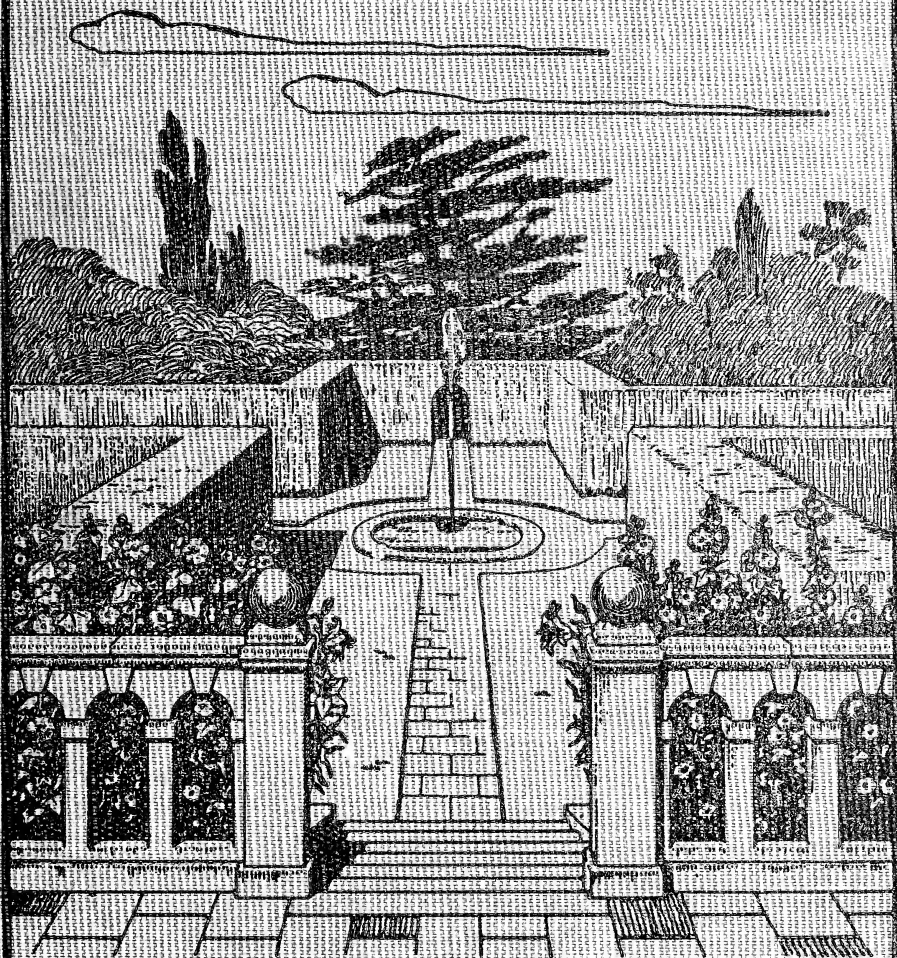
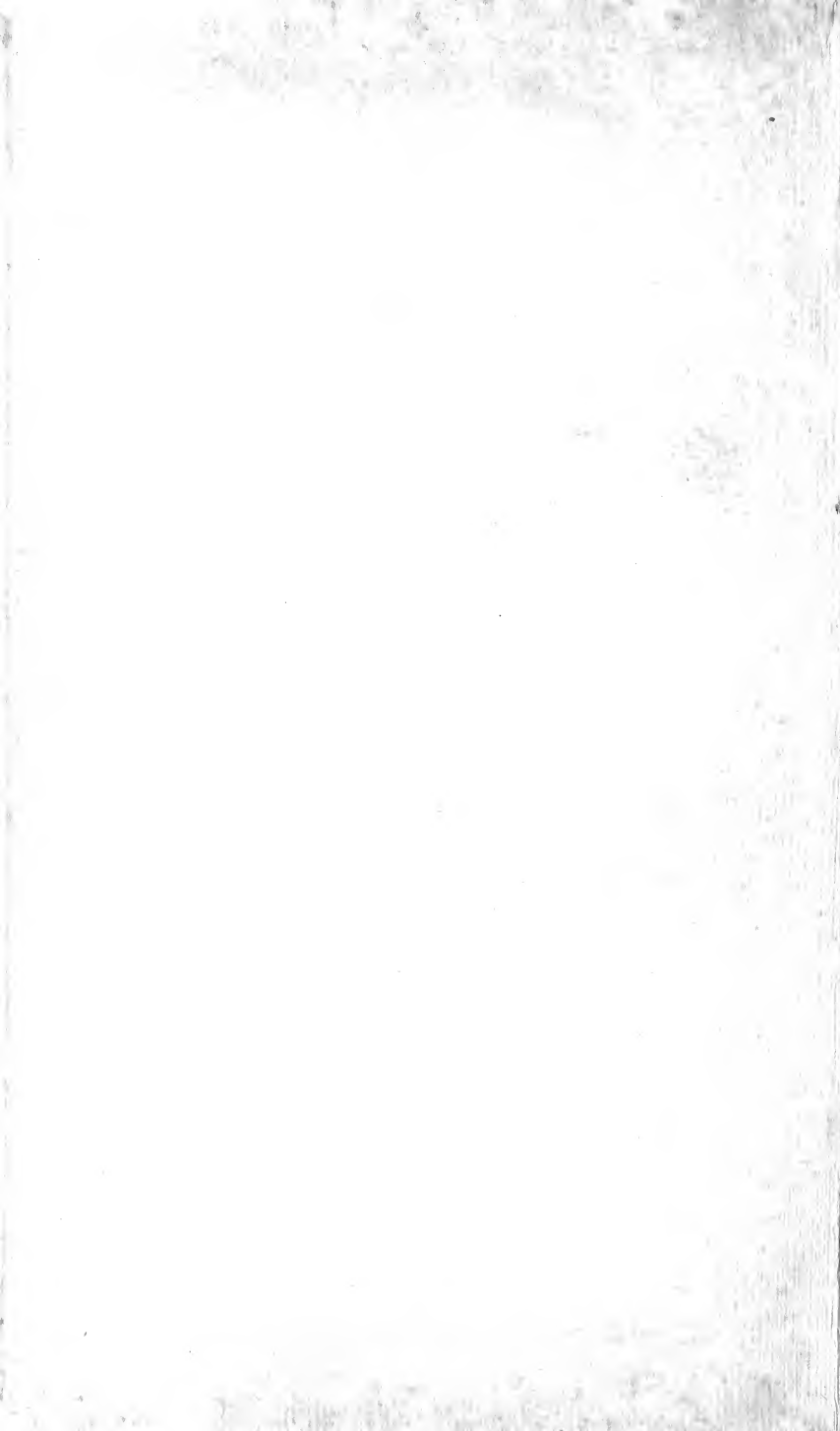


THE HEART OF A GARDEN



BY
ROSAMUND MARRIOTT
WATSON







THE HEART OF A GARDEN



FATA MORGANA

By Rosamund Marriott Watson

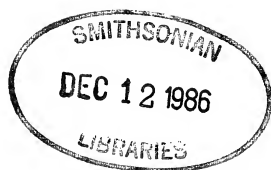
I DREAMED the peach-trees blossomed once again,
I dreamed the birds were calling in the dew,
Sun-rays fell round me like a golden rain,
And all was well with us and life was new.

How that great joy was born I cannot tell . . .
The warm low sun, the blossom on the wall,
With life so new to us and all so well,
And some lost word I never may recall.

Like a dark pool that once did mirror Spring,
Or like a sealed shrine with a secret flame,
Though boughs are barren now and no birds sing,
I know the joy I never may reclaim.

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THE HEART OF A
GARDEN BY ROSA-
MUND MARRIOTT
WATSON



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29

“Le vieux jardin a des vieilles tulipes.”

TO LADY NORTHCLIFFE

BIRDS in your garden once again—
(The old-time garden that you love)—
Wake to the touch of silver rain,
Sing while the gold sun mounts above.

So runs it still, the ancient tale,
Through immemorial years foretold—
The dreaming bride behind the veil,
The conquering Prince with spurs of gold.

And those that say and those that sing
(As thousands dead have said and sung),
Do but enregister the spring,
But praise that world where all is young.

O, many a dream it fades and dies,
And many a hope it lives in vain,
But never dream of April skies,
And never hope of soft spring rain.

Then for your 'ancient pleasaunce' sake,
With all its fair sequestered ways,
Dear Lady of the Garden, take
This book of garden dreams and days.

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POISED on the summit of the deodar
A song-thrush sings, this mild mid-winter day ;
Sings of the Spring, although the Spring is far
And far away.

I shall not see the radiant white-winged throng
That wanders where the Heavenly gardens are,
Nor hear the floating echoes of their song
From star to star.

Yet, though immortal melodies I miss,
Here dwells my heart, nor seeks to soar above
The music of the kindly Earth—and this—
The voice I love.

Infinite solace falls with every note,
And dead dreams flower again the while he sings,
My Angel with the throbbing speckled throat
And dim brown wings.

THE ROAD TO SPRING

THE halcyon days are over : mild and tender interlude of ineffable gentleness, a space of earliest Spring, as it were, but wanting Spring's disquietude. The serene and smiling grace of the low midwinter sun, the milk and turkis skies, the bared beauty of the naked trees, the strange richness of the short emerald grass, so wonderful to eyes already schooled to inexpectancy of Nature's kindness for many weeks to come—all has partaken almost of the nature of a benediction, a respite. The oasis was welcome, and more than welcome ; but the long white road lies ahead, the road to Spring, swept by rough winds, blocked now and again by fog and frost and snow, and yet leading, every inch of it, to the desired haven—

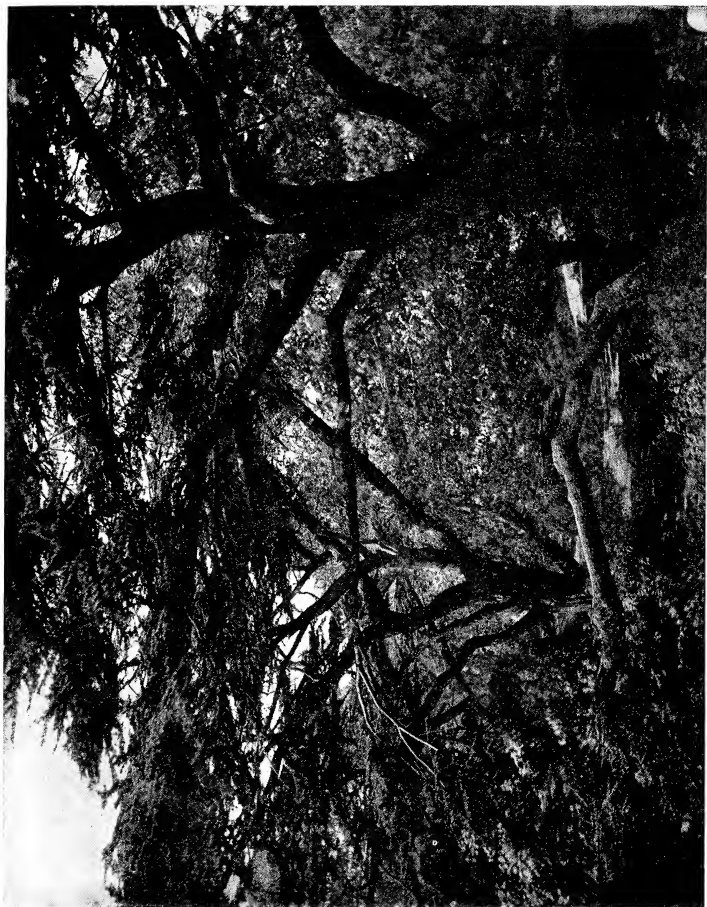
“Over the Mountains of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride, the Shade replied,
If you seek for El Dorado.”

And so we too shall journey on, undaunted by the darkness of the way, even snatching a certain pleasure from its predicaments, and, at times, a swift and sudden joy from some sunlit turn in the highway, some sheltered dip where unsuspected buds may be blowing, fair pledges of the promised land. One needs must take one's happiness where one may chance to find it ; and for all its denials and asperities, I am come at last to consider winter, even our surly English winter, as a season by no manner of means so ungracious as it has been painted. There are ameliorations, there are beauties, if you do but choose

to see them. All the deciduous trees in the garden have shed their leaves, it is true, but only to reveal the infinite variety and grace of their intimate structure. Winter, despite his reputation for seals and secrets, has many disclosures, and this, perhaps, is at once the most interesting and the most pleasing to the eye. Robbed of their green draperies they stand revealed—these trees that summer dresses; while the dim rich evergreens—cypress and laurel, holly, and ivy; the stately groves of rhododendron, with ilex and arbutus, cedar and deodar, and box and yew—stand fast in their dark mail, hugging close their mysteries.

Now it is an old pleasure renewed to note once more how the tall poplar's delicate outer framework aspires, from fragile-seeming curve to curve almost mesh-like, climbing slenderly from beginning to apex, woven in fine rhythm upon a pearl and primrose sunset. The blunt-fingered ash waves supple arms towards you and above; the neighbouring oaks, less disguised by summer's veil than any other tree that grows, show forth their native property of strength inflexible, slow of growth and hard of grain. The oak is a fine stalwart tree, but he would seem to be the symbol of another age than this.

To my mind he is of the Middle Ages; he has, in a measure, the remoteness of mediævalism and the majesty. You are too apt to people the sward below his outspreading branches with folk in vair and velvet, and harness of damascened silver and gold, knights in chain-armour, and ladies with the hennin and the côte-hardie, to consider him an intimate. He is rather the ultimate outpost of old romance. And yet the bare hawthorn's



THE CEDAR GROVE.

twisted maze of gnarled trunk and infinite intricacies of twig and branch—although it reaches out to fancies of an older time, the misty age of myth and legend, murmuring “Broceliande” to you, even as grey willows will whisper “Avalon”—the hawthorn, somehow, wears more the aspect of a familiar. While these have their distinct and separate associations, real or imagined, it is the beech that stands for to-day and yesterday and for all time. Clothed with translucent leafage, or stripped, as now, in suave, silvery loveliness, it grows as a gracious monument to the memory of the old beliefs. To this day I find it no easy matter in the depths of a beech wood to disbelieve in Dryads.

All trees have each their proper charm: the orchard-trees are sweet honest country wenches in youth, and bent but still comely and hearty gammers in old age; the silver birch is ever a dainty *ingénue*; the cedar a very noble gentleman, somewhat of a Don Quixote; but the beech is the incomparable lady, the beautiful princess who never grows old, equally beautiful with or without her green mantle of leaves, fair alike in winter and in summer.

As I pass through the little belt of wilderness that is all our walled-in space allows for absolute liberty, I surprise many a small secret of the little folk who are wont to pitch their tents there in due season. Secrets of Polichinelle, to-day, but none the less agreeable to me. I like it best for the birds to keep their own counsel while there is need; I would not wittingly betray them, but one never knows. In the pride of my heart, and the expansiveness bred by good company I might blab—

and then? No, I want no meddlesome fingers or prying eyes in my minute preserves. But I like to note, now that all this serious business is over and done with, just where they built, my pleasant little garden-folk, and to see their variously-fashioned nests, so deftly made, and—sometimes—so diplomatically placed.

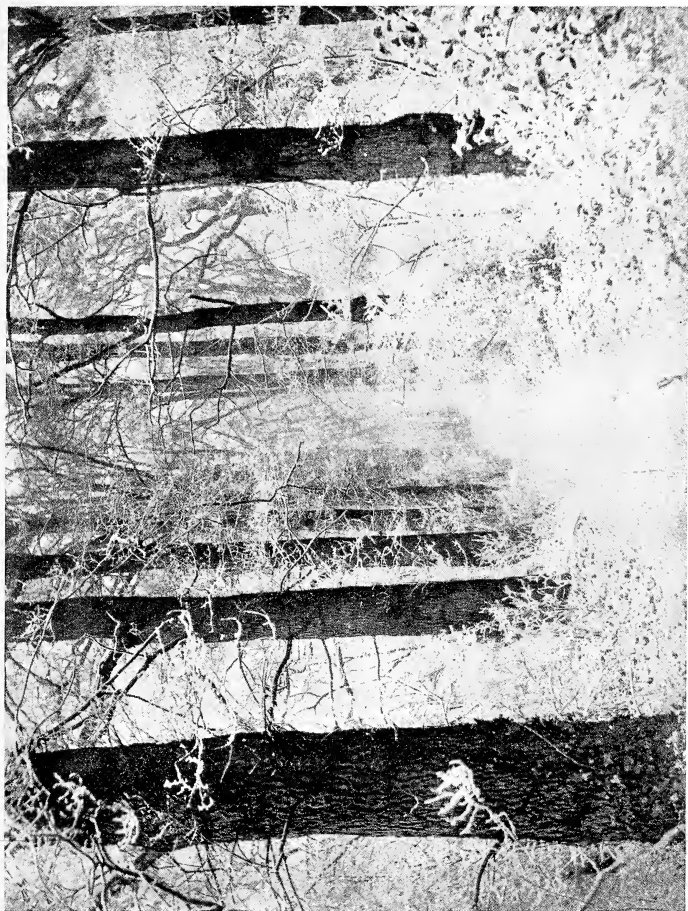
The yellow aconite will be flowering under foot here before long with its golden, green-befrilled buds, and the snowdrops that I have been at some pains to naturalise should make a brave show by and by. Overhead there is a continuous soft stir and bustle of birds: the blue and silver tits with their demure black velvet hoods and their elfin airs and graces are mighty busy; up and down and in and out they glance, most delicately important of mien, and I wonder now if this may be the family that was reared last spring in the old leaden urn beneath the large ilex. Very numerous and very vocal was that candid brood; it seemed as though the fledgelings were demanding food with menaces the whole day through, and even my own humble wriggling offerings appeared to find favour in their midst. There was a secret so flagrantly open I could not choose but know it, yet I do not think they fared any the worse for their indiscretion. Those dainty little brown sprites, the wrens, are full of mysterious activities, and bold robin with his breast at its very brightest orange-tawny meets me at every turn. Fleet-ing glints of green and gold betoken the shy presence of the finches, and silent thrush and blackbird set about their avocations with an air of hardihood they did not show in spring. The tiny running streamlet is a true benefaction to them all.

On the topmost twig of the walnut-tree balances a huge rook in his solemn black soutane, curtseying and cawing in grotesque protestation. Why he so troubles deaf Heaven with his bootless cries I cannot think, unless it may be from sheer aggrievement at finding all the plunder gone. But I believe it is I, forsooth, who have the better cause of complaint, for he and his gang it was that robbed me of at least the half of my harvest this year. Many a strange sacerdotal-seeming feast have I surprised in my own orchard only some half an acre from here, when the nuts were at their best. But some folk have no sense of shame, and it is not the cowl that makes the monk. These gentlemen presume too much upon the sombre propriety of the black robe, I think. Go hunt at the tree-foot, friend, amid the tangled ground ivy and the fallen leaves, and it may chance to you, as often aforetime to me, to find a nut or two still sound and sweet within. It will profit you not one whit to keep curtseying and crying upon the clouds.

"Qu'est-ce qui passe ici si tard? Gai, gai, gai!" rings the old rhyme, brought back to mind just now by a lisping, whistling assemblage of shiny-coated starlings engaged in some noisy commerce or other, big with that pose of false business habits which could deceive no one, but above all abounding in gaiety. Early or late, the starling is always gay, which is of course to be counted unto him for righteousness. Upon the whole I find my attitude towards him undergoing a gradual change. Time was when I saw nothing but his ill qualities—his vulgarity, his greed, his blatant pushfulness, his friendly toleration of my enemies the sparrows—and could not

away with him. But now, even though I may not esteem him more, I am bound to confess to something very like a sneaking affection for that small, smart, rowdy personality of his. "Though a poet"—and a distinctly minor one at that—"he is gay." He is always gay, even when sentimentalising in song as like the thrush's as his husky little throat can compass. He is something of an idealist too, the man in the street, as it were, who supposes he has an ingrained passion for the fine arts; and his admiration of the thrush, who will have none of his company, is sincerity itself. So I have come to look with amused liking upon his clumsy *minauderies*, and to make allowances for his detestably bad manners, the more especially at such moments as when, sauntering between bare orchard trees in the murky glow of a dim red winter sunset, one is suddenly aware of having trespassed upon the blithest company in the world. There is such a clicking of castanets, such a ploy of light-hearted, stammering gossip, such liquid, sibilant calls and cries that you might well think to have stumbled upon another Goblin Market. The starling is certainly a scandal-monger, and probably a knave, but he is a merry soul and the cheeriest of company.

The hoar frost and the snow have been weaving their white magic over the garden, a wonder that never stales, but would seem to hang out fresh signals to the sense at every visitation. When you awake in the clear shining of the sun to discovery of the night's enchanted work, wrought with such swiftness, in such silence, it is as though you walked in a new world, in some strange



A SOLITUDE OF SNOW.

kingdom of faëry with trees of silver and flowers and fruits of diamond and pearl. Every foot's pace bears you on to more revelations in this enchanted pleasance. Winter is indeed a rare artificer: there is not a leaf, or a blade, or growing spray or mass of plant-forms that he does not take pains to transfigure almost out of all knowledge. This is surely the apotheosis, the magic hour of every humble unblossomed herb and green thing the garden grows. Spring and summer may bring no largesse for these, autumn no splendid stains and dyes; but here is winter, another King Cophetua, one might say, scattering his jewels broadcast with so royal a bounty that each unconsidered twig, each sober leaf of evergreen, is clothed with glories as great as, or greater, than the rose. Where there is already, as in the clustered ivy or Portugal laurel, a fine grace of outline and of form, it is intensified and made manifest a thousandfold; while, so marvellous is this pure wealth of pearl and crystal set against the sun's clear gold, that it obliterates imperfection and exalts the commonplace. The scentless yellow jasmine trails upon the trellis like frosted amber, the dark leaves of the hellebore gleam all bediamonded about their pale roses. As I pass my herb-plot's bejewelled tangle, forgotten and left to wildness in the press of other work, I cannot find it in my heart to repent my omission, for had it been properly "redd up" and set in due order I must needs have missed this faint, sweet incense, the ghost of a perfume, that breathes from it to-day. How and why I know not, but some mysterious alchemy of sun and snow has drawn forth a fragrance of myrrh and thyme commingled, that sets you thinking of

Solomon's Song and the beds of spices when the wind blew from Lebanon.

Dante, whose spirit was of the South, pictured a glacial place of terror, and his image of it is horrid enough, in all conscience. It smites imagination into shuddering, like some dreadful tale of Arctic desolation, or sinister histories of frozen ice-bound ships on the high seas. And yet, and in spite of all human fears and quakings ever inspired by the inhuman sovereignty of the great cold, is there not to us of Northern ancestry, of mainly Northern blood, a something that goes out joyously, with a sting, too, of recognition, to the frank, shrewd weather and the first snowfall? It is, in all likelihood, a blind survival of an ancient and outworn instinct originally barbarous of character, compact of the joy of battle and the bitter pleasure of resistance, the strong will to live, in short, now merged in milder sentiments—flushed warm with the colours of the sunset and stirred sharply by the white unearthly beauty of the frost. The great post-mundane glories of a new heaven and a new earth were prefigured by an oriental imagination, but from the pictorial point of view I think a visionary might build Paradise enough from a snowclad garden-close and a fair sky. “And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” That is the gold of winter itself, gold of ice and sunlight, pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

My hellebores have not disappointed me this year, and those which I protected are of especial excellence and purity of colour; the milk-white are my favourites

still, but the softly empurpled blossoms, as well as those that blush with a delicate pink through their petals of snow and ivory, are mighty pretty, and welcome beyond words at this season of flowerless parterres. It is pleasant to see the strong blunt buds pushing their way up through the dun earth and the snow to the light of day amid those dark sentinels, their leaves. It is yet another assurance of life's persistency, of the robust and vigorous striving of the earth. I believe, for all the pains and penalties involved, that I should be something loth to miss winter from the year's calendar. There is so much that is comely and reviving in the atmosphere, which is essentially that of hope, however long deferred; memories of spring and summer take on a greater glory viewed through this lengthening vista. You are not burdened with that spendthrift consciousness that will sometimes fall upon you in the very heyday of the prime, of being in the act of consuming your substance with vivid improvidence, forced, it is true, but improvidence all the same.

Winter can show a kindlier face than one guesses, and when, like the unthrifty Lord of Linne, you may have fancied you were come to the end of your wealth, he is apt to offer you an undreamed-of hoard, the beaten gold and "the white mony" that are to console you for treasure spent. So long as one may have sight of the sun for a few hours on most days, and keep a bright hearth withindoors, I do not think we are so very hardly used; the pleasures of retrospect hang the long galleries sacred to their use with arras of unfading beauty, while who but Hope could make the corridors of the future

to flower so wondrous sweet and fair? We look before and after, and take heart afresh for the journey, perhaps even with an impulse to sing upon the way. Of all the many great and gracious sayings that "R. L. S." has left us, there is not one truer to my mind than this (which comes, I think, in his "El Dorado"), that "to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive."

In the garden every portent points to hopeful travel: such roses as are more sensible to cold are safely swaddled in russet withered bracken, cut down long since for their winter negligées; some pampered favourites have even been given little conical peaked head-pieces of straw that make them look in the late twilight, when the moon is rising, like a witches' gathering in miniature. The rosemary is decked with her small wan florets, and the laurustinus spreads its dull waxen umbels in the shrubbery above the shallow graves where the dead leaves lie buried. *Que la terre leur soit légère!* In but a very few months' time primroses will be flowering where they fell, arising in due season to play, these also, their little part in the immemorial game of life and death.

The sundial of grey stone stands like a monument and pledge of summer upon the sunken lawn between the high walls that engirt the rose-garden. The reigning season has despoiled it of the greater portion of its grateful task, and here it stays awaiting the sun's pleasure. "So flies Time away" is the quiet legend it holds up to the light, and I do not believe its long-dead maker could have hit upon a better one. Only to con it over is to invite serenity and the gracious influences of the sun, to see all things in so mild and equable a light as leaves no



GRASSY PLOTS.

room for trouble or unrest. How well Charles Lamb interpreted the true sentiment of the dial!

"What a dead thing," says he, "is a clock, with its ponderous embowelments of lead and brass, its pert or solemn dulness of communication, compared with the simple altar-like structure and silent heart-language of the old dial! It stood as the garden god of Christian gardens. . . . It spoke of moderate labours, of pleasures not protracted after sunset, of temperance, and good hours. It was the primitive clock, the horologe of the first world."

At all times and seasons and in all weathers it pleases me to walk here; disquietude could find no finer antidote, believe me, than the green confines of this narrow pleasaunce with its garden god dumbly eloquent of happy patience and the spirit of ancient peace. "So flies Time away" . . . the words to me seem the very epitome of composure and pleasant cheer, perhaps because I have known them for so long, scanned them so very often. Swift's friend and patron, Sir William Temple, so willed it that when he came to die his heart should be buried, enclosed in a silver box, beneath the sundial in his beautiful Surrey garden by his house of Moor Park, and in the end his wish was piously fulfilled. The desire may possibly smack of fantastic sentimentality to some, but I think I understand the impulse that inspired it. The romantic expression of yesterday took other forms than those we know now. "So flies Time away," and yet . . . and yet, where your treasure is there will your heart be also; and who shall say whether the garden-lover's treasure may not be about the turfy precincts of his dial in the green depths of his garden?

I DREAMED the peach-trees blossomed once again,
I dreamed the birds were calling in the dew,
Sun-rays fell round me like a golden rain,
And all was well with us and life was new.

How that great joy was born I cannot tell . . .
The warm low sun, the blossom on the wall,
With life so new to us and all so well,
And some lost word I never may recall.

Like a dark pool that once did mirror spring,
Or like a sealed shrine with a secret flame,
Though boughs are barren now and no birds sing,
I know the joy I never may reclaim.

FALSE DAWN

THERE is no year that I can positively call to mind wherein the later days of winter, nay, even mid-winter itself, have not from time to time suffered a fitful invasion from the hosts of spring. After weeks, it may be, of shrewd and biting frost or cold, Niobeian rains, or, perchance, some monstrous siege of winds like famished wolves, you waken to a dim rose of dawn where the thrush is singing. Not, it is true, with the full-throated ease of the time to be, but tentatively, almost timidly, you would say, faint, broken cadences of an unearthly sweetness. The air is cool yet infinitely gentle, while fresh from great spaces comes up the western wind, blowing free through low gold sunlight, the wind of dreams, the wind of memories, that every year blows youth into the heart with so convincing a touch that belief in miracles becomes the easiest matter in the world. "*Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne.*" Our wind is no messenger from beyond the mountains, but a visitant from mead and forest and restless sea, bearing with it the same intoxication, the self-same disquietude, for is it not the air of romance itself, the very breath of spring? All through the garden there is a pleasant stir and murmur, a thrill, as it were, of new life. The illusion is perfect. Tree-buds are fuller, glossier; birds are making haste about some mysterious business, stealthily important, full of secrecy and affairs; the wet lawns are greener than graven emeralds. You hardly miss the flowers, so clear is the mirage, so potent the magic of

false dawn. And even flowers are not wanting, multitudes of small gold heads have shyly thrust themselves up through the dark earth, wrapped closely about in their green hoods, which, as the sun grows warmer, they will fling back to do service as jaunty fringed capes. Like sunlight turned to blossom seems this singularly gay and ingenuous young child of the year, the year's first flower that never sees the spring. And yet what more gracious manifestation of the ways of spring could be than this? So after all the winter aconite has its little day.

The frost has gone back to his stronghold, and though this manoeuvre may be but a feint, a retreat to strengthen the next attack, we are grateful for the armistice that comes in so fair a form. Drift on drift of delicate, aerial grey cloud piled up to the over-arching dome of palest pearl, have melted away, while the luminous rift that marked the lair of the silver February sun has widened, dissolving into a glory of gold.

Spring's own speedwell blue, sown with white cloud islands, has taken possession of the skies, and the heart of the garden rejoices and is glad. High on the topmost silver twig of the leafless walnut tree the thrush has taken up anew his wondrous tale; his notes drop through the soft air like falling rose-petals, while a little below, with sedulously studious air and head poised in earnest attention sits his satellite, a plump and glossy starling, whose dark habit takes the sun in sombre iridescence. He is trying his hardest to absorb the lesson of the master, and, considering well his vocal limitations, we shall find in time to come, to no mean purpose. He at least appears to love the highest when he hears it.

Down in the pleasaunce, as in the wild garden also, countless crocuses hold up rich goblets for the sun to fill with added lustre. They are clustered very closely in liberal groups, star-scattered on the grass—orange and saffron, and white with red-gold anthers; imperial purple, lilac-stained, and some lavender-striped for all the world like an old-time dimity gown, they repay with ample interest the forethought that set them in their appointed places. So, indeed, do the snowdrops after their shyer and less candid fashion, the rare and intense purity of their frail bells showing with an almost dazzling effect of whiteness against the vivid environing green. From the wall of ancient ashen-grey stone stretch long straggling trails, in exquisite disarray, of yellow jasmine, clear amber florets on smooth jade-green rods of a most delicate proportion and an uncompromising air of stiffness, that charms at the same time by its very archaism. It is of a primitive simplicity, that vaguely brings to mind the dear dead ladies of Botticelli's limning, together with wafts of song from mediæval minstrels, Minnesinger and Trouvère. Who could miss remembering once more that old embodiment of the spring's inspiration—old and new at once, for the Vidame de Chartres it was who made the song in the beginning, and the master-hand that recast it with golden touch is known too well to need naming. "When the fields catch flower and the underwood is green"—it matters little that no fields will flower for many a day yet, nor that the underwood is still a delicate dim tangle of cloudy greys and russets, save where the tassels of dusty "lambs' tails" (as country folks call

them) hang golden green from the hazels. The spirit of the lay flits beside you as you walk, sings in your ear, even as Ariel sang to Prince Ferdinand on the Enchanted Isle. To-morrow may find us in the desert once more, beset by harsh blasts from east or north, or, peradventure, disconsolately journeying through flurries of whirling snow. For which reason alone, were there no other, one should make the most of every moment spent within the perfumed precincts of this oasis.

It is almost as though you took notice for the first time since the turn of the year of how far the slender spears of daffodil and narcissus have risen through the moist brown mould; you can trace the long lines, the serried squares where they are growing in their thousands with some sensible realization of the miser's fearful joy. So much to spend, and all unspent as yet, you are still rich beyond the dreams of avarice, with inalienable possession of the promise—promise that is always so immeasurably more delightful than fulfilment.

It is easy to see where the great trumpets of the Golden Spur will rise triumphant by-and-by, from the colour of their strong lances, the greyest green that ever was beside their mellower neighbours. The fantastic columbine's first foliage clusters thickly near the earth in iridescent bunches of purple and sharp green; the Mary-lilies stand at least six inches high, and the light spires of Spanish iris, springing like fields of green corn, would almost persuade you, did you not know better, that their full flower-time was near at hand.

Past the pleasaunce, and through the wilderness, and so out through a wicket that gives on the coverts is the

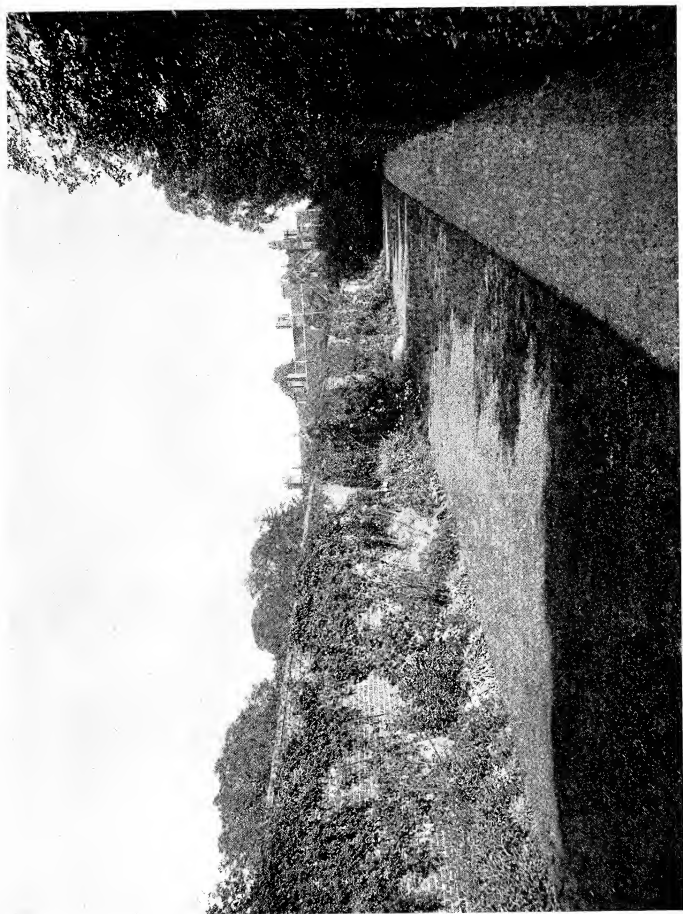
best of all possible ways to wander on such a day as this. There are no leaves yet, of course, but as you pass through the straight ride that intersects the copse there are glimpses of pale primroses in sheltered shallows of the ground, small havens that harbour this most faithful and persistent flower. While on either hand through the tangle of underwood slips the sun from shining twig to twig, from slender trunk to trunk, turning the limpid moisture which suffuses all to crystalline fires that flash or gleam as the wind comes and goes. The fragrance of the soil, the subtle colour that is neither brown, nor purple, nor grey, but lightly touched to tones of all; the leafless stems and branches—leafless and yet so visibly alive; the implicit leaf-buds that look as though they might unfurl on the instant and reveal their sea-green treasures—is this not spring indeed? A silver shaft of song from the robin strikes its chill sweetness athwart the dream that, after all, is truly better than reality, for this is a stolen, or rather a purely gratuitous happiness. When the spring shall come in due season, who shall say what mood she may be in? Peevish, capricious, harsh, as like as not, for all her pretty promises and pledges; but this waif from her dominions is graciousness itself. We have not begun to draw on our store of legitimate spring days, so grudgingly paid away as one group of blossoms follows another into the abyss. Regret, reluctance, lingering farewells, these have no place in our oasis. To-day is to be devoutly enjoyed; to-morrow still to be expected with all the rainbow glamour of hope. What, indeed, is there more to be desired, and do we not, for the moment, as the old saw

says, eat our cake and have it too? The sun goes down in pomp of primrose and saffron behind the dark pines; and, whatever the realities may bring at their appointed time, we have been given at least one illicit and exquisite day before the phantom of false morning died. "I am half convinced," wrote Hawthorne, "that the reflection is indeed the reality, the real thing which nature imperfectly images to our grosser sense. At any rate, the disembodied shadow is nearest to the soul." Never has the true inwardness of all life and art found more explicit and illuminating expression; who shall say, even when this cycle of hours has been long a memory, that the disembodied shadow was not nearer to the soul than armaments of realities.

IN this veiled hush before the next soft shower,
Listen—'tis he, my Lord the blackbird sings,
A wizard chanting from his haunted tower
Legends of lost innumerable Springs.

Long, long ago, and far, and far away,
These golden falls, these strange *legatos* seem
To raise the ghost of a forgotten day,
Or thread the dim maze of some distant dream.

Between the wet woods and the clouded skies
His spell is wrought—the immemorial rune
That charms me back to that lost land which lies
East of the Sun and westward of the Moon.



THE LONG WALK.

IM FRÜHLINGSGARTEN

THE winter is over and gone, and so are the crocuses; the Hooligan sparrows have wreaked their last wanton ravages, for this year at least, upon every budding blossom my garden grows. They are sated with destruction now, and there is nothing but their own brazen bickerings between themselves to distract them from their assiduous domesticities. "When sparrows build," sings the poet; but, indeed, the question I would fain have set at rest is, "When do they not?" Even in the heyday of their early havoc, when all the earth is chilly and uncomfortable, when no grass grows, and the very trees would seem to disclaim austere any possible cognizance of leafage past or to come—even then, while cold pathway and black border are besprent with shredded gold of aconite and crocus and pale primrose buds ruthlessly slain at birth, the sparrows are busy a-building. And still they build. The high, dishevelled araucaria—uncomeliest of trees—is swarming with the sloven nests that, for once, are in harmony with their environment; while all around, from the eaves, from the clustered ivy on the walls, the thick hawthorns, everywhere, sounds the creaking confusion of their shrill bird-Billingsgate—the antithesis, one might have it, of the nightingale's divine, high-piping Pehlevi. And the air-gun is as yet unbought, and, for all our brave words and futile shaking of fists, seems likely to remain in the region of fruitless menace—that same debateable land, close neighbouring upon the

marches of Never, where still linger the demand that the gardener should send in his portfolio forthwith, the visionary cat-trap, the sacrifice of the dahlia-eating rabbits, and much of the like stuff as dreams are made on.

Once, to be sure, Amadis, with heart momentarily made adamant by the rending of his fairest daffodils—long looked for, come at last—took up a catapult, and aimed too well. He is no sentimentalist; but the little, limp, brown body that was afterwards buried in the shrubbery has provided a long safe-conduct for its fellow-malefactors. And still they build. Next May doubtless there will be thrice as many again; and even should I plant for them a flower-plot of their own, the scoundrels would respect mine none the more. *Qu'y faire, mon Dieu—qu'y faire?* One thing is certain, however: the gentle art of execution is plainly not for amateurs. The soft, spring sunlight that has gathered real strength at last makes for optimism and forgetfulness, if not forgiveness. The long tyranny of winter is overpast, and how long that has been may perhaps be only fully appreciated by the owner of a garden for whom the exotic world of glass-houses and artificial heating remains a dead letter. To such an one the late-lingering English winter proves a veritable prison-house, a place for penance and for meditation.

When all the autumn garden-work is over, the last bulb planted, the last rose-bush clad in its winter swathings of bronze-hued bracken, the last dead tree replaced by its successor, falls the chill of silence and estrangement. For all the disciplinarian may preach to

you of winter work and laborious days of trenching and potting and so forth, it is—unless you should chance to have a passion for alterations—as though your garden were a comrade estranged, “a field reaped and gleaned, a church where no man comes to pray.” The winter is old, and it is a silence as of age and death that enchains your pleasure for so many months. But the Sleeping Beauty is awake at last, and the spring sun is her prince. And, after all, it may be that this season owes something of its incommunicable charm to a sense of contrast. There is somewhat, as it were, of the thrill of convalescence that adds intensity to these first moments of release from the valley of the shadow of winter. You are on the mild upward slope, and joy is in the ascent: satisfaction there may be on the summit; but this is pure gold.

“He that has two cakes of bread, let him sell one of them for some flower of the narcissus,” said the Prophet; “for bread is the food of the body, but narcissus is food for the soul.” And as I survey with complacence and some little measure of honest pride my turf-hemmed border beneath the long-armed espaliers, this doctrine seems sounder than ever, for it is filled from rim to rim with row upon row of flowers or the narcissus, fragrant as the Spice Islands, and coloured like amber and ivory. On either side of the many-flowered Tazettas, with their small lemon cups and pearly petals, divinely aromatic and largely liberal or scent and blossom, nod long lines of heavier-headed flowers. Here bloom in perfumed beauty the three best kinds of double-flowered narcissus or Peerless

Daffodil—and thus they are rightly named, although they have other and more homespun titles at command. The rich Orange Phœnix owns to the prosaic *petit nom* of “Eggs and Bacon,” a clear libel upon its delicate white petals and red-gold nectary; while its lovely sister, *aurantius plenus*, fares not much better in familiar wise as “Butter and Eggs.” But the fairest of these three Graces, the stately Sulphur Phœnix, whose exquisitely toned hues of purest white and palest primrose mix and mingle in a fine confusion, bears a soubriquet of somewhat more idyllic flavour. To its intimates it may be known as “Codlins and Cream.”

They are all so late in blossoming this churlish season that perhaps this generous and gay florescence is doubly desirable. Even the buxom old *Telamonius plenus*, earliest and boldest of all, refused to shake out its wealth of yellow plumes long after its lance-head had drooped for opening; while the pretty little early-flowering Hoop Petticoats, both white and sulphur, have unfolded their dainty and somewhat prim skirts more reluctantly than ever before. It is odd that these “pretty maids all in a row” have also a singularly incongruous other name; and whose was the not too happy inspiration that has saddled such dainty rogues in porcelain with the sounding title of Medusa’s Trumpets, I cannot tell. But I will cavil no more at names, for is not the comeliest and the earliest to blossom of all the white-winged trumpet daffodils set down as the *Horsefieldii*? It stands up bravely in the sunshine, my long double row of *Horsefieldii*. The great yellow trumpets make a gallant display against their pure white perianths; so gallant,

indeed, that you might well ignore the ungainly name, and fall to thinking that the horns of Elfland may be near akin to these.

I think I shall never again be quite such friends with Lenten lilies as of old. Spring has turned traitor to them this year in so long delaying their disclosure; and now that I view them, fresh from the sight of their betters, their skimp proportions and too rigid limits of expansion seem almost niggardly. They should have opened earlier, while still one's heart responded easily to small mercies. Yet on the primrose bank, between the shining, rich, green tufts of spears that herald the wild grape-hyacinth, they look well enough.

Towards the single Star Narcissi one's sentiments are quite otherwise, for every succeeding spring makes the heart grow fonder of them, and every autumn one buys more. Apart from their frail and dream-like loveliness and their infinite variety—and I could not, for the life of me, say which kind I should choose if choice were narrowed down—they have other most admirable virtues. You may buy them mixed and not “to name,” and still fare every jot as well as though you had searched the florist's price-list with all the diligence in the world: and, thus purchased, their price—which is, decoratively speaking, far above rubies—condescends with a rare graciousness to even the shallowest purse. Then, again, where the year before last you found, say, two or three starry blossoms, this year a whole constellation shines from the grateful grass. They have the charming habit, so rare in things desirable, of free and bounteous increase. My gardener, naturally, views them with approval so

grudging as to neighbour closely on contempt. "They grow like weeds," says he, and turns coldly away to seek his tomato-house or some other more congenial field of labour.

At first I only set them in the smooth sward round about the fountain; but afterwards came wisdom, and now they make a little Eden of their own in the broad space of growing grass that just divides the desert and the sown, the flower-garden proper and the wilderness. By the stream side, beneath the shadow of high trees, and out in the open meadow, they show with equal radiance. Some thousands, too, are flowering in the orchard, where, by their independent manner of being, they do not "deceive the trees"; neither shall they prove at all meddlesome at haying-time, for long ere then they will have vanished, almost without trace. All summer long, even amid the thronging press of richer rivalries and perfumes more insistent than that rare aroma of theirs, their benefits are not forgotten, but still on noons of burnished heat you are apt to call to mind again the cool sweetness and shallow lilac-blue shadows of gentle April days when the birds sang all together and the Star Narcissi danced like fairies in the grass.

The Poet's (or, as some will have it, the Pheasant's-Eye) narcissus comes later, and is somewhat shyer of habit and less faithful to its tryst with the year; yet one would be loth to miss it from the pageant or spring. The visitant that until lately I have chiefly missed has been the violet, for the inclemency of the early year laid waste my violet-beds, and left the little plants all but



THE LONG ALLEY'S LATTICED SHADE.

blossomless. But quite of a sudden in these last days in the spreading plots of small heart-shaped green leaves has arisen a purple mist which has since burst into the glory of full flower.

“It is not April,” runs the old saw, “without a frosty crown,” and the earlier days of the month have once more borne sharp and sparkling witness to its truth; but now the crown of frost has dissolved into rainbow-tinted dews, and the flower o’ the peach is making a sudden glory of the high south wall at last. It is well indeed that the shell-like buds have kept their own counsel in such implicit patience, for it would have fared ill with them had the brief bright sunbursts of a few weeks since beguiled them into slipping off the protection of their pearl-grey velvet sheaths. To-day against the dull amaranths and rich dim roses of the old wall these sharp, pure notes of pink that spangle the slender network of rich bronze twigs and branches, touched here and there with tender green, seem full of pleasant promises and instant beauty. And yet, when Preciosa came to visit me yesterday, her praises were faint, and touched, or so it seemed, with gentle deprecation. There was no adequate design, and the masses were not rightly disposed, she thought; neither was there any definitely decorative scheme of composition. It was quite pretty, she was sure, in a kind of art-gift-booklet way, but hardly satisfying to an eye trained to true artistic selection. Why had I not taken unto myself some of those heavenly Japanese dwarf trees; or, better still, domesticated a gardener from the land of cherry-blossom. She (Preciosa) had just been through a course

of lessons in Japanese flower-arrangement, and was now finding her artistic ideas so pruned and chastened thereby that she could take but little joy in my ruder harmonies. It was then that I understood her wistfully disparaging glances at my great Nankin bowl in the garden-room, brimming over with the perfumed warmth and colour of a stout sheaf of wallflowers. And if Preciosa does not shed the light of her countenance upon my blossoming southern wall—why, neither does a higher authority still. Had I but been guided by the twin voices of experience and superior horticultural science, this same south wall might have shown forth a row—icily faultless, splendidly null—of peach-trees as prim as Sunday-school scholars. Their docile frames should trim the walls in outlined pyramids and fans, neat ribbons of rose-flecked brown; and, yet again, it would not be this wall they would adorn, for “old walls harbour vermin.” No; this antiquated structure, hued itself like a basket of ripe, dusky peaches and plums, would have given place to a new, neatly-pointed one—of sallow grey brick for preference, or, peradventure, of doll’s-house red. However, it would seem that the acclamations of the great may be too dearly bought, and so I please neither my gardener nor Preciosa, but merely my own self. I might in due season gather a larger harvest of the rose-complexioned fruit, or I might boast chaster harmonies of line and colour—but I do neither. There will be plenty of peaches to rejoice us all, and so a plague on both your houses. Figuratively, I snap my fingers at the pair of you, and resolve that none shall lay a finger on my peach-trees save in the way of kindness.

There is, I know not precisely why, a something especially comely and reviving to the senses that exhales in the scent of the first spring mowing, even although the shearing be accompanied by the prosaic prattle of the grass-cutter instead of the slow, shy whispering of the scythe, that mysteriously imperative Invitation to the Dream. This year our punctuality forestalled the scythe, so that I am not to hear that sighing symphony, more tuneless than the first autumn notes of the robin—the merest shadow of a song, as it were, and yet touched to the very tones of the Voice of Strange Command. I would have liked well to listen for it through one of these cold blue twilights; to hear its low-breathed questionings for which there never were, there never could be, any answers; and to discover whether it is telling the same fairy-tales as once it used, or has forgotten them for new ones. But, to be sure, such gratuitous delights—and, indeed, I am not so very certain as to whether they were real delights or no—could only be the fruit of a neglectfulness and lack of method more befitting the garden of the sluggard than this trim pleasure. As it is, all the three lawns are as smooth and verdurous as a bowling-green; the winged white marble Sphinx is back in its place upon the grass under the great ilex; and I am more than ever heartily agreed with Francis Bacon (Lord Verulam) in his pronouncement that nothing is more pleasing to the eye than green grass kept finely shorn.

The birds, with one exception pleasantest of all possible neighbours, are wonderfully full of affairs; I shall be very sensibly duller when they have settled down to

the uncommunicative peace of summer. One wonders whether foreign wild birds can be such impassioned devotees of the bath as these our garden guests, or if it is merely the imperishable British *acharnement* for the tub that makes my broad round fountain-basin as populous and brightly voluble as a modish *Kur* in the height of its season. Even the heinous sparrows are positively avid of ablutions, although it must be confessed that they look not a whit the less dingy for all their diligent splashing. They are very welcome to the hospitalities of the fountain despite my feud with them; but it is when I come upon them in dry weather wallowing in my flower-beds—for nothing less will serve them as sites for their dust-baths—and mark the unsightly hollows and dunes which disfigure my parterres that the old bitterness is renewed.

It is full soon for the cuckoo as yet: rarely, now and again, you may hear his phantom note floating up from the deeper copses; but the wood-pigeons that are nesting in the tall trees of the nearest coppice are seldom silent, so that it is well for me that I am not of those who hold their sweetly grievous moan “an exquisite style from which to refrain.”

The chaffinch is still somewhat chary of his pure rippling cadence; but he practises sometimes, and at every fresh essay it draws nearer its own crystalline perfection. Why, I am moved to marvel, have the poets delighted to honour so many less distinguished singers while this charming melodist remains unsung? The very spirit of spring is in his throat; and if airy blossoms of pear and cherry could dematerialise into song, then

surely their music would be like to his. You are moved, as you listen, to remembrance of that favourite of the Good People, from whose speaking lips fell showers of diamonds, roses, and pearls. The tits are repeating their tuneful trivialities over and over, with many variations, as they glance from bough to bough among the blossom-buds, a blithe and dainty little folk indeed; delightfully arrayed, as ever, in subtle tints of green and blue and yellow, with the sharp emphasis of jaunty black velvet cap and cravat giving point to the scheme. Those hearty vulgarians, the starlings, are here in force, too, impudently glossy in their greenish-black coats, the which it is hard to believe cannot be really a size too small for their pussy, waddling little figures. The braggarts are especially important just now, for they are setting up house again—building you could scarcely call it—in their inevitable spring quarters in those old apple-trees of the orchard that offer friendly accommodation of hollows sufficiently inconspicuous from the starling point of view. They are all vastly loquacious, and some of them imagine they can sing: there is one tubby sentimentalist among their number who is for ever trying at flagrant imitations of blackbird and thrush. His performances do infinite credit alike to his enterprise and taste, but they sound sadly out of tune.

It seems to me this year as though the thrush were less lavish than his wont of his heavenly harmonies; but, perhaps, he is only waiting until the blackbird has exhausted his own full flood of song, for these two great singers will seldom flute together. And the blackbird is singing—singing like a voice in a dream. He is poised

no farther away than the midmost silver branch of the still leafless walnut-tree; yet the mournful triumph of his strange song is touched to magic by that charmed quality of distance, of faint remoteness, that is his and his alone. He would seem to call from some lost Paradise, some forgotten age of gold that at rare moments you may almost think to remember. "Over the Mountains of the Moon, down the Valley of the Shadow. . . ."

Where is the clue, and what the watchword? But the blackbird knows both, believe me.

A LONG the lawns the tulip lamps are lit,
Amber, and amaranth, and ivory,
Porphyry, silver, and chalcedony—
Filled with the sunlight and the joy of it.

The tulip lamps are lit—the Spring's own gold
Glowing burning bright in each illumined cup,
Wrought in those secret mines of dusky mould
Where Winter's hidden hoard was garnered up.

The flame will fade, the goblets break and fall,
Strewing the dim earth with their beauty's wrack ;
All will be spent and past their festival
Ere the first vagrant swallow shall come back.

THE SWEET O' THE YEAR

“SAVEZ-VOUS où gîte *Mai*, *ce joli mois*?” Who knows, indeed? But this at least we know, that May, the lovely month, has once more come forth of her lair to clothe the world in general, and the garden in particular, with that radiant wedding-garment they may wear but once a year. The delicate mist of pale and tender green that April flung over wood and garden, blotted with white blossom, and touched with so exquisite a purity of tone against the turquoise sky, has flowered into a fuller, if a less ethereal, beauty, and all the golden-green glory of young leaves is about us. However lavish June may prove—and, from the aspect of my budding rose-bushes and tufted strawberry plots, I hope for much from her bounty—this moment is surely the year’s best. The apple-trees are heaped high with their sweet disorder of pearl and rose-hued blossom, the lilacs are swinging rich tassels of purple and white upon the clear sky, and the generous sycamores have unfolded their mitred leaf-buds into broad fans of living green.

The drifting blossom-snow of pear and cherry and plum has melted from the grass, and young green is now once more their only wear. Slowly the web is woven, and every lilac-scented morrow finds us more embowered and built about with leaves. In due season, time and the sun’s power will turn all this limpid chrysoprase to stronger dyes of emerald and jade, less delicate alembics for the light, and informed, to be sure, with other beauty: and then, why then, the miracle of

the year's youth will have been wrought yet again, and we shall pass onward to the maturer and more material joys of summer.

It was one too generous week of warm days, days that outshone many and many a temperate July, that hurried away untimely my nodding rows of daffodils and early narcissi, killed by the sun's unseasonable kindness; but the long pale green sheaths of the double gardenia-flowered narcissus are full of pleasant promise to be fulfilled in the near future. The earlier tulips, too, went not unscathed, although the fierce light that beat upon their crowns made more for detriment to form than actual withering. The fine reticence of the slim closed chalice, mysteriously swathed, was taken from them by those imperious rays; but none the less they made a brave show among the lawns and in their proper borders, for all the world like myriads of faëry lanterns, lit by the sun and giving back the borrowed lustre with an added radiance of their own. Amber, amethyst, topaz, white onyx, amaranth, and porphyry—these are but a few colours of the tulip-lamps that glow together in the sun; while, as you tread the smooth sward between them, you might well think to have stepped into a story from the Arabian Nights. Indeed, I believe a barbaric taste in tulips—and I must needs own that mine so inclines—is no bad thing, provided always that it is sufficiently intemperate. And I have still in grateful remembrance a certain bed once planned in defiance of all the laws of harmony and tradition, which, none the less, became a joy to the beholder. Wildly gay as a macaw or as some Persian



A BED OF EARLY TULIPS.

carpets, it was touched to a fantastic beauty that charmed the eye, and took the imagination, as it were, by storm, perhaps in part by reason of that very strangeness of proportion and of colour. The effect, too, was vastly helped by a liberal underplanting of auriculas, primulas, and polyanthus, whose dim moth-like dyes made both for emphasis and relief in the scheme of kaleidoscopic splendour.

I have had nothing quite so barbarously beautiful this year, albeit some of the tulip plots looked well enough with their milder mosaics; the kingly Keizerskroon, for example, with its bold and yet refined contours and opulent gold-rimmed crimson petals, blended in royal state with the Duchesse de Parma and Thomas Moore—two rarely beautiful tulips that are sometimes taken for one another by the superficial observer. But they wear their red with a difference; her rich bloom is more suffused with ruby and russet, while he glows with a clearer flood of orange-tawny. Besides, he boasts more inches than she. Very simple in its naïve success is the bed of mingled white and yellow Pottebakkers, whose broad-built curves would seem as absolutely Dutch as is their name, that bounds the second lawn beyond the clipped yew peacocks, with a wave of colour wonderfully opaque and pure. And the bed that grows the great goblets of rose-flushed ivory that florists call Joost van Vondel in its centre, flanked by dainty roses and lilies of the fair Rose Luisante and Cottage Maid, shows as gay and exquisite a festal air as any painted garden fête of Fragonard or Boucher. Again, the stately White Swan rising above thronged

assemblies of the delicate carmine-freaked snow of the Silver Standard has all the elegance—and thrice the freshness—of an old brocade. For a fine, if solemn, amaranthine red there is no tulip of my acquaintance that I would set before the grandiose Cardinal's Hat; but that is not for plucking; once set in water it will disclose a sallow centre that dispels its dignity. Not so is it with my faithful Van der Neer, which will fill impartially with bounteous grace either the great Georgian copper urn, the shining Sheffield vessel, or the plumply-fashioned vase of blue and white Delft. Without doors, as it grows in the garden-beds, its frank and full-blown purples might be thought to verge very perilously near upon magenta, were it not for the sympathetic tones of mauve and lilac that inform the colour of naked earth. So that, here, the delectable practice of underplantation would fail of its purpose and prove nothing better than a marplot. I have yet to discover a really harmonious neighbour for the Van der Neer; it is in passages of gorgeous discord, when you are composing a plot that shall resemble one of Aladdin's palace windows, that he is invaluable. Another magnificent irreconcilable is the Greigii, whose flamboyant beauty, like the poet's rose, angry and brave, might well bid the rash gazer wipe his eye. This also is of lusty proportions, and should you, as I did, happen upon it suddenly amid a circle of frail rose-pink Van Gooyen, you too might have shared the pangs of George Herbert's rash gazer. However, that arrangement found place in Araminta's garden, not in mine; and if one is not timid of strong colour, there should be tremendous potential-

ties in the combination of this orange and flame-hued flower with its proper peers. Monticelli would have known how to deal with it aright; and I am by no means sure that thereby does not hang an illuminating suggestion. Why not a Monticelli plot for next May? There might be a very pretty holiday task in the planning.

Gone where the old moons go is that first brilliant host of Paynims, but it has left us such successors as take the suns of May with beauty: beauty so strange, so various, so alluring to the imagination, that I find myself straying towards the plots that enthrone my tall May-flowering tulips a dozen times a day. Like the Lily of the Enchanted Sea, they wave their illumined heads to the breeze, this wonderful trinity of turban flowers, and which is fairest I could not for the life of me tell you. The names that classify them seem singularly unsuggestive, but then that is a characteristic of so many names. The Cottage, the Darwin, and the English Florist's tulip, these are the three arbitrary divisions of this Arabian Nights' treasure, which, buried once, reduplicates itself and increases year by year.

The limitations of time and space conjointly forbid aught but a meagre tale of their majestic loveliness. Some are translucent, some semi-opaque. Some (and these the English Florist claims) are all freaked and marbled with diverse rare dyes—white, with deep rose; purple, bronze, and amber; primrose, orange, and russet, mix and mingle in such barbaric splendour as you might think to find in the robes of the African magician.

Then you have rich cups that glow with the colours and the faint bloom of plum and grape, of apricot and peach, together with dim, fawn-flushed lilacs and oranges vermillion-stained. One of the loveliest and the best among the Cottage tulips is the Picotee, carved out of primrose-tinted ivory, and every slenderly curved petal pencilled at the rim in purest carmine by some elfin artificer. The Sultan is, most appositely, almost black, but comely in the extreme in his ebon bravery shot through and through with dark amaranthine gleams; while close beside him stands, like some fair Circassian of the Seraglio, the Fairy Queen, who, one would think, must surely have arisen out of the mists of some magic cauldron, wherein the enchanter had commingled pearls and opals, amethysts and violets, rather than from the common sources of being.

Each group that marks a further stage on Spring's highway one leaves reluctantly; it is *ave atque vale* yet again for another whole year long, and you would be hard put to it to say which you regret the most. Sometimes I have thought it to be the lilac; but just for the moment I am almost convinced that it is the earlier tulips—not, let me say at once, the very early Duc van Thols, whose hard gem-like flames leave me cold—but that taller, many-coloured multitude whose goblets open wide to exhale their fragrance of wild honey before they break and fall. And most markedly perfumed of all these is Mon Trésor, a veritable *pomme d'ambre* with the scent of a tea-rose. Yet, for all its intrinsic worth and loveliness, even this fair company will show to mean advantage under the tyranny of

mistaken marshaldom. In Araminta's garden-close, for instance, the beds and borders would seem to be, as it were, in livery, so inflexible is their order, so uniform their manner of array. You might, and not ineptly, compare them to well-drilled regiments standing for ever at attention, like the faithful sentinel of Pompeii. Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite beyond it, blooms the garden that Araminta loves. As a matter of fact it flourishes well within the intrenchments of Suburbia, and is the very apple of her eye, all the more so, perhaps, because of her earnest conviction that she has brilliantly grappled with the problem of horticulture under the Fog-ogre's sphere of influence. His is but a sorry chance at the black job of burking Araminta's flowers; for, like the wise virgin that she is, she leaves him scarce any victims for the slaying. Hers is the exaltation of the bedding-out system to a plan of campaign so flawless as to inspire esteem rather than pleasure in my sentiments, but which, nevertheless, claims many fervent and sincere admirers. Bordered with shining immaculate tiles, upon a sea of yellow-red gravel sparkling to the light, floats her archipelago of flower-beds, each compactly filled with blooms of identical hue and height. I have accused her of measuring them, but she merely smiles, conscious of her garden's rectitude. Tulip succeeds to hyacinth in due season, stolid blocks of colour that suggest the florist's nurseries' unfriendly stare rather than the intimate amenities that should smile up from your own garden-ground. One cannot but feel that, to complete the picture, the florist's *funeste* tin labels should be planted at head and foot of every

geometrically shapen bed. And, indeed, the suggestion proved a happy one. "What a capital idea!" cried she, brightening; "I will order some to-morrow." Her merriest moment, however, has hardly yet arrived, though well I know what it will bring, for Araminta has a constant mind. Every bulb will be plucked out and cast from her, while a riotous and familiar feast of colour arrives in their stead. Calceolarias, red, white, and pink pelargoniums, lobelias, petunias, golden feather and other foliage plants, a sprinkling of forget-me-nots, and nemophila, white and yellow marguerites will mix and mingle in the plots, and canariensis intertwine with pink ivy geranium about the trellises and urns. "It certainly is a great expense," says Araminta, with a happy sigh; "but then, you know, the garden is my one hobby, and I do so adore my flowers." So does she not mine, which she, I know, considers a spiritless, ill-regulated horde, although she has far too kind a soul to damp my spirits with the knowledge.

Thus are we both happy in our lot, and I the more signally just now, inasmuch as the pride of my heart, my May-flowering tulips, are at their best. Of the Cottage tulips I know none more majestically refined in form than the tall lemon-hued Golden Crown—by some called Golden Eagle—with its narrow, barely divined red-laced edges, jet black anthers, and finely peaked petals. Whether growing in grass or the parterre, these beautiful descendants from gardens long ago flourish and increase with such a gracious hardihood as moves me to marvel much at their comparative infrequency. For it is but rarely that one finds them in the



WISTARIA.

average garden; and yet one would think that their tall and graceful stature, their infinite and rare variety of hue, together with their genius for multiplying, should combine to give the entire May-flowering groups a large and liberal space in the flower-grower's affections and borders to boot.

All are exceedingly beautiful, and, at the first blush, there would seem hardly a pin to choose between them; but, with more intimate knowledge, certain examples detach themselves from the mass, and the spirit of favouritism develops. Not the favouritism, be it said, of the florist, who, in common with all his fellow fanciers, appears, for the more part, to have had no rhyme nor reason for his æsthetic preferences. *A chaque oiseau son nid est beau*, and there is no extant branch of "the fancy" but has its own peculiar fads to foster, as tiresome, perhaps, as the nursery's—or the lover's—little language to the detached observer. Both are innocuous, and even amusing, provided always an unparticipating attitude on the part of the audience; as you could not take the little language seriously, neither should you lean upon the serviceable fancier as guide, philosopher, and friend. In the choice of flowers, above all, one is well advised to take one's pleasure where one finds it, and there is infinite pleasure to be found in these late varieties, of which I am inclined to think the English florist's the most excellent, for the Parrot or Dragon tulip, despite all its fantastic beauty, is too weak of stem to bear its motley honours with majesty. As I pass between the broad herbaceous borders and along the tulip-litten turf and mark these strong tall stems that

bear aloft the long, full, yet slender cups, chaste of form as Greek vases of the finest period—some coloured like chalcedony, some as ashes of roses, white jade, pale amber, alabaster, silver and gold, besides a score of different lovely dyes; those others again, streaked and marbled with rich harmonies of contrasted colour, that I call my Indian princes; as I look upon all these, I am well pleased that my lease of life was not dated in those days, some three centuries since, when every bulb of the Turban-Flower would cost its weight in gold.

It is, indeed, a happy transformation that has changed the skies and the mood with them, insomuch as, although not so very long since it was our fondest wish to wander over-sea in search of sunshine, we are now vastly contented to remain at home and enjoy our English summer at our ease. It was, if I remember rightly, Napoleon's favourite general who symbolised the English army as a short blade exquisitely tempered; and whether M. le Maréchal Soult was right or wrong I cannot tell. But had he made that famous pronouncement as regards our summer, I should have found myself in the most cordial agreement with him. The blade, to be sure, is very short, but of how exquisite a temper!

Brevity is its sole defect, and even that makes, maybe, for an acuter sense of pleasure. Are we not upon the up-grade still, with winter's injuries just far enough behind to be forgotten, though not forgiven, and the Gate called Beautiful opened wide before us? The daffodils have waved us their lingering farewells, and the gleaming cohorts of the earlier tulips have cast down their bright crowns one by one. Would they could

have stayed with us, for their abdication is a sensible miss that has more than once furnished forth a sad problem for the improvident. I myself—but I have learned wisdom since, and refuse to be haunted by unfruitful by-gones.

Soon, very soon, some of the beds and borders where they grew will show discreetly gay with closely-serried ranks of the poor man's orchid, the dainty Spanish iris; while others are to be thickly peopled with certain annuals. The bulbs will be lifted and left to ripen, or, as the old country phrase has it, to "harvest themselves," in that especial plot of ground which has been set apart for a tulip hospital, and their places filled with whatever one may find best in their stead. As for instance, I have planned some very pleasant harmonies in rose and white, in white and blue and purple, and in white and lavender, to flower presently in the form of asters. Some are delicately striped, like old dimity; some wear their petals with a difference, but incurved, plumed, pæony-flowered, or quilled—all are delightful and well worth the growing.

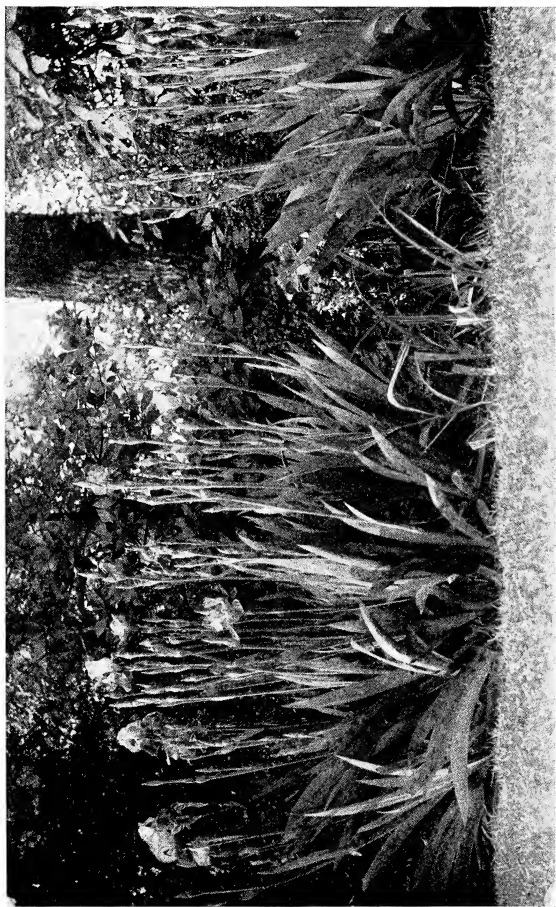
If, however, one does not like to wait, it were best to have done some judicious underplanting in late autumn, or very early spring, of auriculas, say, or violas, or Iceland poppy. It is almost as hard a task in the midst of autumn to have faith in spring, or in spring-time to prefigure the fall, as for youth and eld to believe in one another; but if only you act upon blind belief in the late year you will reap your reward when you and your garden are at one once more. In this golden hour of the great rapprochement it were all but impossible to

realise the sullen skies that looked down upon its patient inception.

The herbaceous borders have not, of course, come yet into their full inheritance of bloom, but there is in them just so much implicit promise and exquisite performance as touches close upon that golden mean which embraces near hope and present happiness in one. My single anemones glow like jewels in enamelled lines of purple, blue, and vermillion; of amethyst, pearl, and opal, against their curled green field of foliage. Although these have no fragrance, they are informed with so satisfying a beauty that it is only a waft from the almond-scented masses of the gillyflowers that brings to mind the one thing wanting—and, even so, the wall-flowers are rich enough in perfume for all. A little farther on, at irregular intervals, between the young starry leafage and dimly purpling spires of the lupins that are to blossom later, glitter innumerable rayed gilt suns of the leopard's-bane, most generous and gay of early flowers, whose ceremonial title is given as *doronicum*. For my part, I think the old is better, although I have never come at the true inwardness of its original meaning: it is a diversion, say some, from this or that obsolete name, remotely significant of ancient usages; but few of my theorists agree, and I myself am best content with the vague derivation that is propped upon romance. In the shelter of the high western wall that goes to meet the pergola grows a spacious group of those cool grey-green wands set on either side with their double rows of long strangely fashioned leaves, and hung with white waxen bells stained snowdrop-wise with faint



HERBACEOUS BORDERS.



IRISES.

green, the tall arched sceptres of the Solomon's Seal—another name that spells mystery and enchantment, but here of a more cryptic kind. I have never been quite able to disabuse myself of the idea that these sealed blooms that rise year after year in shadow still hold some secret of antiquity behind their pale closed lips; “men sell not such in any town.” All around and beneath them to the border's hem spreads a sea of fresh green, whose delicately odorous foam shows in pure white bells of lily of the valley, while across the way the ethereal gaities of the fair azalea mollis take the sun with such a clear and candid charm as to set all their little portion of the world *en fête*. This gala-like impression is partly due, I believe, to their soft translucency, and in part also to the radiant purity of their diverse colours, the very ensigns of youth; it is not precisely the hue of lemon, nor of apricot, nor primrose, nor yet quite of coral (even if coral could be made transparent) that delights the eye, and yet you are set thinking of each and all of these. They would seem to have something in common with the earlier paintings of Albert Moore, and the pity of it is that their fragile loveliness must end so soon.

There are certain plots that I almost always set aside for violas and pansies, although they have a share, besides, in the hospitalities of the mixed borders; and of these the most important is the heart-shaped bed beyond the sundial upon the sunken lawn. Here you may see to advantage the constant play of softly broken colour; blossoms now rich, now pale; pansies in their gowns of damask and pied velvet freaked with jet; violas blue,

white, sulphur, and lilac, some of the well-beloved of the florist's "selfs," which signifies, as you are aware, all of the one colour, together with others that are lightly flushed and stained with various tints, and these last are best liked of me. But all are delightful, and remind one of nothing so much as an airy host of butterflies resting from flight, yet fluttering ready to take wing. Happily, however, this pretty habit is but an idle boast; for both violas and pansies alike are very constant to the places they adorn, and will bud and bloom and wither over and over again with unfailing faithfulness, provided only that there is some one to mark the full-flown blossom directly it begins to flag, and delete it swiftly before it has time to turn itself into a seed-vessel. Had I, as had the ladies of Hogarth's time, a little "woolly-headed blackamoor" for page, this work of excision should be chief among his summer tasks.

Blackbird and thrush still are singing of summer, now one, now the other, and sometimes even both together. "Be quick, be quick, be quick! . . . Marguerite, Marguerite!" cries the one, with many a sweet trill and tender turn besides; but the other sings in an unknown tongue, in the lost language, it may be, of El Dorado. His is the true *voix d'or*, and he would seem to flute from some haunted palace of the past—one can almost see its golden domes and milk-white minarets, high beyond its thick, embowering forest of ancient trees.

The minor minstrels of the garden are making melody, too, save only those whimsical sprites the tits, and they are taking domesticity so seriously that they have all

but forgotten to fling their dulcet chidings and contradictions in our teeth. The slender, lightly flitting whitethroats are mysteriously busy amid the large old rose-bushes—"turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May"—and on the lower plane, all about the lawns and in and out the box edgings, the sparrows and the starlings are making merry after their gross and mundane manner.

Upon close acquaintance, I find the sparrows insolent but unafraid, while their patron the starling, for all his brazen mien, is merely a poltroon. There is one shiny rascal who has just secured some noisome *bonne bouche*, and suddenly become aware that I have seen him. So far from standing his ground like a stout fellow, he scuttles away as fast as his short legs can carry him to the shelter of the rhododendrons, for fear lest his unsavoury morsel be rapt away from him by my superior greed. All his habitudes wear the same plebeian stamp, and he would no more crack his snail upon a stone and eat it like a gentleman in my presence as would the thrush, than—well, than he could rival his betters in shape or accent.

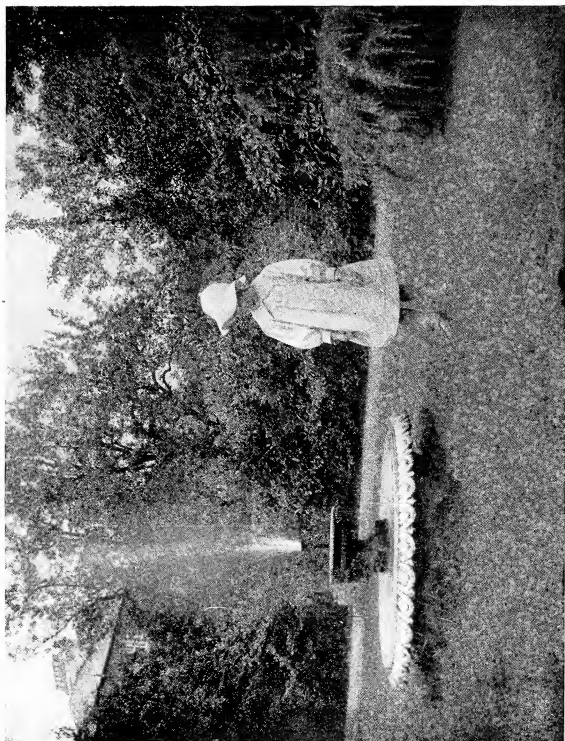
You will observe, moreover, that although the wide, shallow bathing pool is boisterous as Brighton in July with families of sparrow and starling, its yellow marble rim shows no other birds. They choose a different time.

I did well, I am assured, to plant bushes of sweetbriar at intervals along the lilac-walk, which is in fullest glory of its varied purples, blues, and white; for the two perfumes, like mingling songs of blackbird and of thrush, enhance and deepen each the other's charm. In the wide herbaceous borders and the wild garden the

earlier irises have reared their exquisite sceptres; the royal purples and the rich blues were first to come; and now the sweet-scented Florentina has stolen forth in all her ghostly glories of faint, faint lavender and dim, dim pearl. If this be not riches—but surely it is! And there is yet so much to come.

Although blossom-time has drifted by the shell-pink medlar bloom still lingers amid its soft green leaves; the lilacs are most beautifully and wonderfully with us, the laburnum is already touched with gold, the hawthorns are giant nose-gays of snow and roses, the pheasant's-eye narcissus and its double sister shine with classic grace among their cool grey-green spears hard by those green arches of Solomon's seal. The lily-of-the-valley beds seem more fragrant and virginal than ever.

I would that I had been advised by Armida and under-planted most of my old rose-bushes, and some of the new, with the dim purple-chequered snake's-head fritillary, and its even fairer sisters, the Lamias of the garden; for now that I have seen these phantoms of delight weaving their ghostly sorceries in her demesne I am filled with envy and remorse. Still there is much, and very much, else to be glad for. Never before have my sweet-scented irises beacons with such wealth of promise; seldom have the early rhododendrons shown themselves so bravely trimmed with their pyramidal lighted altars. To-day is delightful, and to-morrow wears such a charm as only to-morrow may. The birds still sing, but with a less rapturous persistence than at first; while the cuckoo, a pillar of cloud, as it were, by day, and the nightingale, a pillar of fire by night (if one may so



A DAY IN JUNE.



figure song), enchant the copses as of old. Lindens and beeches hang this palace of early summer with their freshest tapestries; and I am, besides, rejoiced to see that the oak is most certainly to be before the ash. Now comes in the sweet o' the year, and it would be good indeed to linger, were it possible, in this magic moment, before the great summer silence descends in royal pomp upon the garden, and "Time, throned on a saffron evening, seems to chime all in."

TO C. S.

THE blossom-snow begins to blow
About the orchard-close,
The fields forget the violet;
But soon shall come the rose, my Dear;
Ah, soon shall bloom the rose!

The long year's prime is summer-time,
And summer's coming on;
But the spring o' the year is all too dear,
And spring is past and gone, my Dear;
Oh, this is past and gone.

SUMMER'S LEASE.

WE had barely said "It is spring," and spring was gone. Surely never before sped any springtide away on such swift sandals as this, so that I stand amazed, like the Monk Felix, who listened to the snow-white bird for an hundred years that were but as a summer noon for him, and marvel vainly at this stealthy flitting of the Bird of Time. "Faster than fairies, faster than witches," the radiant emissaries of spring have travelled by us; it even seems long already since the lilac plumes rusted on the bough, and the brief glories of hawthorn and laburnum illumined branches no longer rose and white and golden now, but merely green, the pleasant green of young summer. It is not, however, precisely a sense of loss that holds one, but rather the vague impression that something precious has slipped through one's fingers unawares; of having, as it might be, dozed through the most perfect passage of a song you may not chance to hear again. Down the long garden walks, and all through the wilderness, the air is sweet with the strange, penetrating perfume of syringa—the Mock Orange, as they used to have it—with its small chalices of amber-centred ivory, haunted, wheresoever they may flower, by thronging ghosts—souls of summers dead and gone. Here, too, are bowers of amethyst and pearl, dark towers of rhododendron lighted up by torches of pale or rosy flame; and soon the dim places of the underwoods will be lit with sudden fires of the St. John's wort, glowing like cressets of burnished gold along the ground.

With other departed glories I must count the hedge of guelder-roses, whose snowy heads swung gently to the breeze such a little while ago; and the pergola in the South Walk that showed so fair with its trailing clouds of blue honey-sweet wistaria and white innumerable stars of the mountain clematis. Yet here the glories have not altogether taken flight, for, a little farther along, the leafy tunnel blossoms afresh with clematis stars of greater magnitude, and colours ranging from white to lavender, from rich sapphire to royal purple. I do not think my mixed borders, where annuals and perennials meet, have shown so much of gaiety before; I would not be ungrateful to past summers, but this year the seeds of April's sowing and the older habitants alike would seem to combine in fresher, brighter harmonies than ever. This is Joyous Guard indeed; look where you will there is some new charm of colour and of grouping; it is all as dainty and various as a child's country posy. Hosts of irises, bronze-pencilled and golden; white; white laced with lavender; blues and violets clouded with white; lemon touched with primrose, they stand like fairy pavilions amid their broad green spathes. Very lovely and pleasant in their short lives are these emblazoned lilies of France, and, when their flowering season is done, they leave no uncomely relics, fading gracefully away from the life of the border, while their lusty leafage covers, and atones for, their retreat. "Summer's a pleasant time. Flowers of every colour!" And, indeed, my garden-plots to-day bear ample witness to the sincerity of that inspiration.



THE NEW ROSE-GARDEN.
(From a photo by Lady Harnsworth.)



The only pity of it is that these crowded hours of glorious life are so fleet of passage; you have scarce welcomed the lordly gifts of the lilac when, hey presto! they are gone, rusted like fairy gold before your very eyes. And so it is with all the rest; slow to come and quick to go are all these radiant visitants—orchard-bloom and hawthorn, wistaria, guelder rose, acacia, and laburnum.

With the snows of yesteryear I am not over-much intrigued; it is the blossom-snows that I regret, the early bloom of the year's morning, the irrecoverable spell of dawn. It is all but high noon now, and—summer's a pleasant time; were it very ungracious, I wonder, while taking in both hands the bounties of the moment, to look with longing down the way she went, the way of Spring, the true *Princesse Lointaine*? She passed this year so swiftly—so many months must come and go before she may return; in the meantime, it were well to make the most of summer's lease, and take all possible pleasures from the fine pageant that is going by.

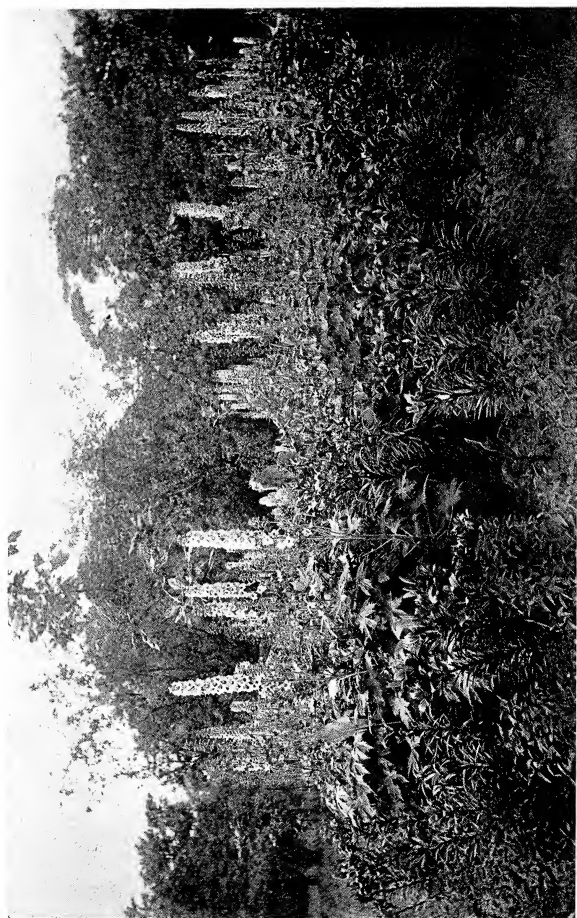
The tall, rich lupins, white, purple, and blue, whose shining cohorts showed in such multitudinous array but a short while since, have shed their braveries, and once again descended to the dust, while clustered spires of blue and white Canterbury bells, campanulas, and majestic minarets of the delphinium now make merry in their room.

Wonderfully rich and various of tone are these same towering spires of larkspur. Keats need have tripped no further than a full-blossomed border of them for the

keynote of his famous sonnet; but, although their chiefest colour is blue—blue of summer seas, of summer skies, of the mist on Surrey hills, turquoise, sapphire, lapis-lazuli; blue of those small, strange gods that one finds among the cerements of the dead of ancient Egypt, *tout le lyre*, in fine, of that exquisite dye—it is by no means their only wear. Besides the almost innumerable variations played upon the one sweet air, in forget-me-not and rose, the fine colour-chords of lavenders and lilacs, imperial purples and rare violets, all harmonised to absolute perfection, we also have this delightful flower clothed in palest clouded amber, and, again, in soft, golden-eyed white, “wands of ivory tipped with gold for awful kings.”

And yet, despite their beauty, the austere vice-regent of my garden looks askance at all this lofty magnificence. Tastes differ, he is magnanimous enough to allow, and here we are cordially agreed. I, for example, have nothing but sheer aversion from the huge, bloated and blotched calceolarias that he would dearly delight to honour—but for my determined opposition; while he would give a warmer welcome to my delphiniums were they only dwarf varieties, and—in need of more assiduous attentions.

Dwarfness, Difficulty, and, in parenthesis, I will say also Doubteness; these be your gods, O Gardener! And, indeed, I wish you joy of them; for never, “though a’ the seas gang dry and the rocks melt wi’ the sun,” not ever will they be mine. No matter how ill-favoured the nymph may be—and even the flower-world has its Tritonnes—if only her constitution be sufficiently



A BORDER OF LARKSPUR.

delicate, the gardener's heart will leap up when he beholds her, his tenderest cares will be spent upon her fostering, and no fare will prove too costly for her consumption.

There is less of yellow in these borders now, and more, far more of blue. Mainly blue are the lupins' tall steeples; there is much blue of the iris, while many of the columbines wear blue with such a grace as almost to persuade me that it is truly the sweetest colour that's worn. But, even so, blue tempers rather than predominates the pretty medley. Some of these same hybrid aquilegias are tricked out very fancifully with divers other hues, as, for instance, with a delightfully delicate combination of pale lilac and lemon; but there is no end to their variations, and all are comely. "Granny Bonnets" the cottage folk call them, and there is a something quaintly pleasing in the title.

The sweet-williams are flourishing finely; their prim, delicate little faces look up from the tufted trusses that enshrine them with an air of soft reserve that is almost conventual in its staid serenity. They are damascened and diapered with all manner of dainty dyes of crimson, carmine, and rose; some are austere with sober chocolate trimmings; but the prettiest, to my mind, are those of pure white brocaded velvet, for all the world like those downy white moths that flit under the leaves in summer twilights. Fragrant stretches of pinks, white and rose, and laced, are flowering harmoniously near, and I am convinced that they prove sympathetic neighbours to the sweet-williams, while I am to the full as sure that each of these modest groups casts side-long

glances of shyest disapproval towards the huge clumps of that splendid savage, the Oriental Poppy, who flaunts it in flaming orange and vermilions over the way, against a sombre background of box. For my part, I take pleasure in his rude magnificence, gaudy as he is, and in the plenitude of the feathery grey-green foliage that serves him for a throne. He is, so to speak, the Turkish knight of the summer garden, as the pink is its Saint Nitouche.

As the heart of the true gardener leaps up when he beholds a plethora of bedding-out plants, so does my froward fancy rejoice over the hardy perennial, and one of the brightest and most liberal of this delectable company is the pyrethrum. Both double and single it flowers, borne gracefully erect upon long, slender stalks of an admirable firmness, and whether the double or the single is most to be preferred I could not say. The one perhaps is richer in softly broken colour, while the other charms most wisely with its fine simplicity, and rare purity of tint. Do you grow both, as I do, and there will be no harbour for regret; the more particularly if the single be somewhat in the majority. As regards colouring, you will find no hardy flower to surpass this in clarity; its colours range from strength to delicacy; blood-red it grows, purple, deepest or palest rose, cherry, lilac, sulphur and white, and many another beside, and all dowered with that quality of exquisite cleanness which belongs pre-eminently to the daisy tribe.

As it is I have just returned from loosening the bonds of these same dainty, many-hued pyrethrums, that some

call the poor man's chrysanthemum, to which an over-zealous sense of discipline had dealt out strict fetters of confining bast, constraining their pretty elegance to the stiffness of a Georgian grenadier. I do not like my flowers with too many gyves upon their wrists, and it seems to me for the moment as though a judicious use of the scissors were worth hours of honest toil and leagues of bast.

The flower-garden is almost at its gayest moment; the perfumed, fringed white pinks, with their elaborate lacings of wine-colour or faint green, the not less fragrant rose pinks; fluttering menies of viola and pansy; fantastic companies of antirrhinum, powdered with divers dyes, for all the world like ancient chintzes; scented stocks, nasturtiums that flare to flame-colour or fade to amethyst—there are too many to be named or numbered.

But the sovereign lady of all herbaceous things is surely the pæony, and it has pleased Son Altesse to be especially gracious this year, so that lawn and borderland, drive and wilderness shine in unwonted pomp, while the Oak Parlour blossoms like the rose, and smells almost as sweetly, with the gathered blooms. The portly blue and white Delft jars, the dragon bowls, the Ionic urns of pale pewter and glowing copper, are filled with these giant roses that reign in equal loveliness within doors or without. Double, semi-single, single, anemone-flowered, these are but the rough suggestions of their forms; as for their colours and the whole refulgent beauty of them, I resign from telling of it. My words that would praise them are impotent things

indeed. They are Cyclopean roses, fragrant, wonderful, with much of the lily's sculptured loveliness added to them beside. One parterre that enshrines these, and these only, leads a sedate, glossy-foliaged existence of serene monotony for a good three-parts of the year, or, may-be, a little longer; but in its full flower-time it is a miracle, neither more nor less, out-blossoming the rose, and making of the magnolia but a pale ghost to the memory. Great golden-hearted moons of ivory, lustrous globes of rosy-tinted pearl, strong spheres of coral and of peach, swing and sway above their fields of shining leafage, exhaling an enchanted perfume. Down the long drive, and bordering upon the shrubbery, they rejoice the June days and the heart of the beholder with their frank assurances of fairy-tales fulfilled.

Not the least beautiful are the single, and the almost single, simulating titanic briar roses, which have lost not one whit of their native delicacy in the translation; while those called double and anemone-flowered offer charms of a more opulent, yet by no means less exquisite, distinction. It is the magic-fruited orchard of Aladdin that one walks in here and now. While, again, between smooth sward and marble balustrade, upon the southern terrace, flower alabaster chalices, touched here and there to gold, above their rich leafage: scarce a stone's throw from the rose-garden itself, crowding close around the old stone lanthorn from Japan, there spreads a field of nodding blush-rose and Persian-pink globes, with scattered notes of apricot and coral, that would seem to have borrowed beauty from skies of summer dawn. There are flowering

masses, too, that bring to mind fair tropic shells or the Star Magnolia in the heyday of its prime—but even that in all its glory was not arrayed like one of these. True it is that they are somewhat apt to use the royal privilege of caprice—I, at least, have so found it—but a good year like this makes full amends. Still, for all these imperial divinities, I have not utterly discarded my older friend, the buxom, blowsy crimson pæony; “like some poor, nigh-related guest, who may not rudely be dismissed,” it spreads its ample charms abroad in many a corner of the copse and the wild garden; for thus placed, the reproach of rank odour and coarse mien falls from it and it is justified of its existence.

Down in the orchard garden, despite the large and liberal promises of peach and plum tree, apricot and pear, there is a gentle sense of gloom, emanating, it would seem, from the power that fain would be, of respectful disapproval, as it were, and, had I the conscience of an earwig, I should feel myself overcome with guilt. “*J'accuse*,” says his every glance, and “I foretold it” lurks unspoken beneath each murmured pessimism that he utters. And the worst of it is that he was right and I wrong, and the pigeons have eaten the sweet-peas—my milk-white pigeons, with the roseate feet, of whom I could believe no evil, whose saintly presence seemed to brood as a beatitude above the lawns, about the trees. Or, watching them with eyes half-closed in the warm sunlight, tripping daintily to and fro with measured paces and trains uplifted, they have seemed to me for all the world like the delicate

Damons and Phyllidas of old romance and courtly *fêtes galantes*. However, there is, alas! no shadow of doubt; they have really eaten the sweet peas, my doves "with the crow's rebuff." So we must even forego the fragrant butterfly festoons this year, and next year they shall be sown elsewhere. It is quite singular to note how invariably mischievous and baneful in the gardener's sight are the favoured minions of his *châtelaine*. "A favourite has no friend." I think Mr. Gray never penned a truer line; last year it was the Belgian hares who figured as the evil genii of the plot of ground in question; the year before, if I remember rightly, that bad eminence was accorded to Momotaro the pug, and Badoura the white Persian, whether justly or not I cannot say. But of one thing I am very certain, the fantails have been pilfering the young gooseberries and I am not going to tell of them.

They are mowing the meadows now, and the whispering, sighing song of the scythe calls to me as I go down towards the rose-garden, questioning still: "Where, oh, where?" it whispers, over and over again, melancholy sweet as some melody of Schubert's own making. "Where?" asks the wistful voice, while the tall grass falls and shadows begin to lengthen on the sunken lawn. I have never found the answer yet for all these years of asking; and I am going down into the rose-garden before the sun leaves it, giving place to twilight. But the blackbird is singing still, and it pleases me to think that he makes answer to the scythe in that golden unknown tongue which he alone may use.

A long lance of late sunlight strikes athwart the smooth-shaven turf between the cedar plumes, reddening to clearest ruby the old Provence roses that crown the western wall, and touching to even frailer beauty the shell-pink petals of my trailing briar-rose. I were most ungrateful and altogether unworthy the possession of a single rose-tree did I not render to the new and the comparatively modish roses the homage which is their due. They do, indeed, hold ample space both in my garden-plots and my affections; and still I must confess to a lively sense of regret for the many lost and forgotten roses of old time now disowned and discredited by the severe fancier. At the same time I thank my stars for a goodly heritage of ancient roses; here grow great bushes of Provençal line, unutterably fragrant; here the snow-white Garland is prodigal of its pearls.

The abominable aphid is as ubiquitous as ever, and the fat brown worm in the bud, together with his wriggling grey and green coadjutors in crime, has been trying to do his worst, yet, in spite of all these evil attempts, the rose-garden is full of blossom and bud, and most luxuriant of leafage. The clipped yew hedges that environ it make a pleasant shelter from rough winds, while the fountain in the centre, where an infant stone Triton is for ever spouting rainbows through his chipped conch-shell, lends soft sound and movement to a pleasaunce that else might seem too profoundly sunken in silence and perfume. As it is, I would not have it changed one whit. Araminta looks coldly upon my flowering hedge of briar-rose and eglantine, all bespangled with its frail shell-pink and snow-white

blossoms. It is untidy and straggling, she holds; neither will she shed the light of her countenance upon the climbing pink china roses that help to hang the pergola with their sweet loose-leaved garlands. "Too cottagery," says she, "you see them on every other village porch; 'tis a waste of your space to let them grow here, when there are so many really good, new sorts to be had." And she positively frowns upon my narrow moss-grown border edges of carved grey stone that are as old as the garden itself. They have such a *triste*, neglected look; she, Araminta, has just acquired some lovely art tiles for her new borders, and she will graciously bestow upon me the man's address. So I shepherd her gently towards the parterres where flourish my more modish trees, away from the undisciplined delights of the long grass walk where bushes of the old Provençal rose grow high overhead on either hand, strewing the sward with their blown petals. Need it be said that the gardener is dying to pluck them all up and cast them from him? But, indeed, I am no rosarian in the real sense of the word, and, dearly as I love the roses of to-day, the rose of yesterday grows very near my heart. In shape and size I know it falls so far below the ideal of the expert as to amply merit his indifference; but for scent and colour and luxuriance of growth there can be none better. *Hesternæ rosæ* . . . most of their proper titles are forgotten out of mind, and only the general classifications remain, but I am not so very greatly concerned with names while I have the flowers themselves. High overhead they blossom, bright against the summer blue, some in great



ROSE POLYANTHA GRANDIFLORA.
(From a photo by Lady Harmsworth.)

clustered bouquets of rosy lilac, white, and rose ; some are living rubies with the sun shining through, others like a shower of pearls flung abroad upon the spray. And if you look lower, you will find here the fragrant Maiden's Blush, indefensible of contour, but most delicate in perfume and of hue ; the old Damask rose, nearly single, with its golden heart ; and those fantastic red and white freaked roses whose capricious broideries resemble one another so nearly ; the York and Lancaster, Rosa Mundi, and the French Village Maid. It seems a pity that these last are such unprofitable flowers for plucking ; they would make charming breast-knots, or crown delightfully the Lowestoft bowl were they not over-ephemeral of habit for either office. The leafy group of Boursault bushes surrounding the little mock-Attic summer-house that simulates a shrine, I cherish almost entirely for the sake of the perennially green and constant foliage with its velvet texture and delicately indented veins. I care but little for the flowers, they show too marked a suggestion of magenta to please me ; yet they look well enough half lost amid their full, soft leafage, and their loose petals hold a strange sweet aroma, peculiarly their own, that ensures for them the honour of a fragrant entombment in the rose jar. There is a high thick hedge of Boursaults in the orchard, too, and it is here that I come for foliage when I have need of it.

This first summer month that brings the rose has brought an unaccustomed wealth of bloom to that little-known and half-forgotten masterpiece, my Lamarque, of whose possession I am, perhaps, not unjustly vain.

The merit, however, of setting it where it still glorifies the worn stone coping of the ancient red brick wall belongs not to me, but to some beneficent Unknown, who planted roses some seventy years since. I would I might leave behind me as sweet a monument. The flowers are of the purest white, the dense white of the water-lily, and their great moon-pale cups lie open wide, like marble blossoms carved in low relief, exhaling an exquisite odour. Think of the mingled virtues of lily and rose in one, and you may forthshadow some dim likeness of the Lamarque, should you not be so fortunate as to know it already. The fancier has long years ago pronounced it "not fit for show," with, I have no doubt, good and sufficient reason; but his ideals are not invariably my ideals, nor his roses my roses.

The tall stone columns are all gaily garlanded with their strong climbing roses; the pink and white Blairii flutters its soft petals aloft, the Gloire de Dijon (always more lavish than lovely) is prodigal of its bulging flowers, and the William Allen Richardson grows more comely every day. He has resumed his ensigns of clear orange now; but at first, as oftentimes happens, was his gold complexion dimmed to a mere phantom of its proper self.

I incline daily more and more towards considering this season a veritable *annus mirabilis* for the rose-garden: so profuse and abounding are even the most austere reserved of its fragrant tenants. The climbing Devonensis, my first favourite among roses of the trailing kind, has forgotten its wonted shyness, and beckons from loggia and trellis in beauty irresistible. I know



A ROSE-GARDEN.





LA FRANCE AND GABRIEL LUIZET ROSES.

its faults, and admit them freely. To be sure, the experts' indictments are absolutely true, there is no denying them; the long, gaunt stems race up, leafless and ungracious to the summit, whatever that may be, of wall or trellis. But, once arrived there, with what exquisite beauty are those awkward brambles clothed. Perfect of scent and form, in tone and colour neighbouring a faintly rose-flushed pearl, to know it is certainly to love it, and instantly to overlook its eccentricities, were they twice as many or as great. It is at its best, of course, in bud, for the fully opened flower, delightful as it is, loses that implicit loveliness which informs the folded petals with the faint blush of a pink pearl above, and, at the base, a dim, an almost indistinguishable stain of green. In bud, too, it breathes a perfume as subtle as its hue; one's sole regret on looking on it is that a thing of such absolute perfectness should last so brief a time. But perhaps that also is part and parcel of the charm.

Apart from such arrant favouritism as this, I think my fancy leans more particularly towards the fair tribes of the Noisettes and the Hybrid Teas than to any other group. They are hardy, they are generous, and, as I wander to and fro in my blossoming garden of roses, a score of happy instances illuminate my way and justify my preference. Here, for example, glow those hues of ivory and peach that flush the rounded cheeks of Grace Darling, fitly neighboured by the nymph-like Madame Gabriel Luizet with its silver-tinted pink petals most daintily imbricated. While among these hundreds of flower-faces that claim the tribute of a glance there are

some that would seem to make more instant appeal than others. The Gloire Lyonnaise discloses full white globes among its rich foliage; Captain Christy, even more charming in colour than the Baroness Rothschild, and with the added grace of perfume (which she lacks), shows radiantly roseate, a true marvel of vigour; and, close by, Madame Berard, in whose charming person one finds more than all the merits, with none of the defects, of her robust ancestor, the Gloire de Dijon, is growing in beauty, side by side with one of my very oldest and best beloved friends. Brave in bright rose and silver, and scented like the gardens of the Hesperides, that favoured plot which contains my many bushes of La France is a place whereby to linger, and give thanks. There are moments when I stay, loitering in the late blue twilight, to wonder whether there is any one of the pink roses quite so well worth the growing . . . and, to this very day, I cannot be sure.

TO MOMOTARO, MY PUG

HUED like the full moon of the apricot,
Save where the signs of high descent are set—
Sleek ears and velvet muzzle dark as jet,
On either cheek a sable beauty-spot ;
I watch thee prancing round the garden-plot,
Marvelling why I harbour such a pet,
So vain, so filled with frowardness—and yet
Pleasant thou art, and happy in thy lot.

Food, slumber, play,—what more is there to ask ?
From soundest sleep still starting, brisk, elate,
At faintest clamour of a clattered plate ;
Thine the smooth lawns whereon to frisk or bask ;
Pert little snub-nosed favourite of Fate,
Puck playing truant in Apollyon's mask.

THE YEAR'S HIGH NOON

“CARNATION, lily ; lily, rose” . . . all are with us now in the full and fragrant beauty of their prime ; and, as you pass from one to another on your pleasant pilgrimage along the garden ways, you would be hard put to it to declare which were sweetest to sight or sense.

Even now some of the roses are passing ; and in a very little while hence we shall be rubbing our eyes as we pass the dull green bowers in wonder at memories of white and pink and golden glories, for which they stand as monuments.

Shell-pink and ivory petals already bestrew the dun earth of the border, but there are still buds in plenty to reassure us ; and, though the roses go, and lily goblets break and fall, the aromatic many-hued carnation will remain ; while a whole brave host of later flowers has yet to follow. There is much to see and to enjoy before autumn, the angel with the flaming sword, shall come to warn us off our paradise. At the present moment I do not believe that earth has anything to show more fair than the plots and borders, aye, and the walls to boot, of my rose garden. The pergola is all bedraped and spangled with snowy blots of *Aimée Vibert* and soft pink *Blairii*, while *Rêve d'Or* spreads its saffron clusters in between.

I am fallen somewhat into disfavour with the gardener of my pleasaunce, and there are even moments when I doubt whether he may ever very greatly esteem me

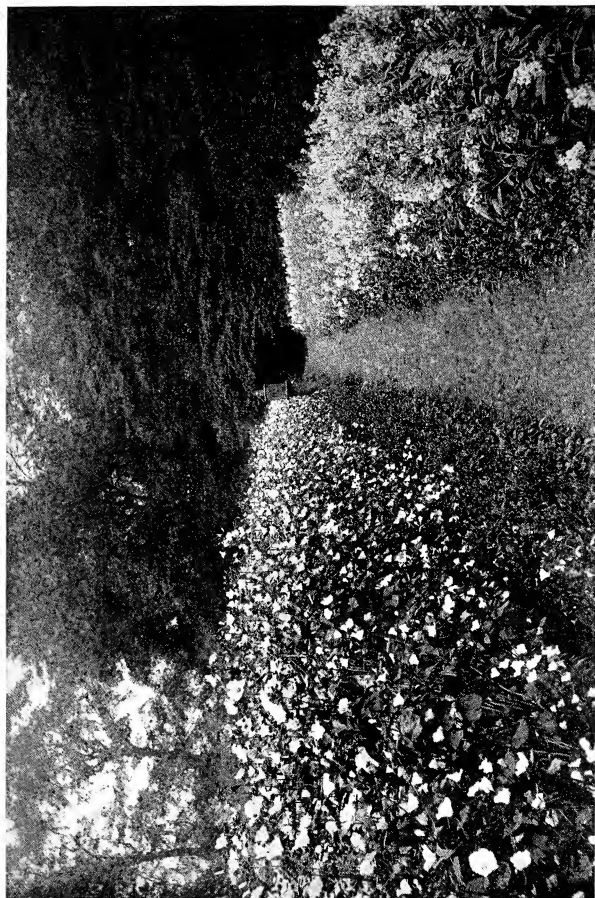
again. I have already done much towards forfeiting his respect, chiefly by reason of my aversion from calceolarias in all their varieties, and the bloated toad-like object which is their zenith, in particular. And now I have been making a mild moan at what seemed the unproductiveness of my strawberry beds that should have been ripe to harvest.

"When I was at Lord C——'s," was I assured in quiet but reproachful tones, "we pulled all the nests out every spring, and many's the blackbird's and bullfinch's neck I've wrung, . . . but some won't have it."

Needless to say that I who speak to you am numbered with that despicable "some," who prefer undiminished song and the dainty joyousness of bird-life in the garden to a surfeit of strawberries.

"We shall have," continued he, "to set one of the lads to watch this upper garden for a day or so; someone has been cutting my nets about." And on the impulse, always unwise, of the moment, I made that confession of which I have repented ever since. Let me make it here anew, and, as I trust, to more lenient ears.

What would you do if, on a blue and golden summer morning, peacefully pottering about your sunny domain, shrill cries of woe and terror rose strident and piteous from your strawberry beds? You, at least, would go and look, as I did, and, unless I am vastly mistaken, when you made the discovery of two buxom yellow-billed thieves, hopelessly entangled in the netting, why you also would draw your garden scissors and set the



A BORDER FANTASY OF BRANCH AND FLOWER.



scoundrels free. Both were absolutely shameless, for all that they were taken, as it were, red-handed—red-billed, perhaps, is better—and one of them pecked me. Yet, having in mind certain mummied feather corses taken up with the strawberry nets some summers since, I am more than half inclined to glory in my shame.

The time of the silence of birds is upon us, and the monotonous sultry-sounding interjections of the sparrows fret the still air continually. They are for ever busy over some tiresome play or other that seems to provoke endless contradictions more or less acidulous, culminating every now and again in impassioned dispute and noisy flurries of combat; when, the undignified scrimmage over for the time being, they settle down into the comparative peacefulness of exchanging injuries at irregular intervals. They are, indeed, the feathered prototypes of the Bandar-log. The life of the garden is perceptibly duller without its music; "the nightingale that in the branches sang," the gallant and generous thrush, those sweetly garrulous elves, the titmice, in their liveries of misty blue and willow-green and silver, are heard no more. Only sometimes a little while before sunset the blackbird flings us forth scanty alms of song from his fastness among the thick leafage. Faintly they sound, those strange, rich cadences, and with a note of such remoteness as though the gates of ivory stood open for the moment to let the lost strain through.

Later on you may hear the dry whit-whit of the robin as he bustles about within the deeper twilight of the shrubbery, preparing for the night as darkness

closes down over the garden, and the pale primrose lamps of the tall *Oenothera* are lighted one by one. The frail night-scented stocks give out almost too heavy a perfume for my unqualified liking; to my mind it smacks over-much of those airs that float over the perfumer's threshold as you pass by. It seems not a little odd to catch nature out in ever so small an error of taste—can it be that she is playing to the gallery? Perish the thought; no, I prefer to hold that she has so over-pampered one with all manner of subtle and exquisite dreams of fragrance that nothing but the best will serve.

Farther down the walk comes a divine breath from a great bush of sweet brier invisible in the blue gloom; and those dim, clustered blots of white and pale rose and lavender that glimmer forth from the mysterious dusk of the broad border, the delicate ten-week stocks: there is fragrance indeed.

July is, surely, the hour of the annual, of that ephemeral company that brightens the borders between the passing of the midsummer perennials and the full flower time of the late comers.

Not yet is laid the motley mosaic of the zinnias, and the first asters are still timid of approach; they are waiting for the mild mists and mellow skies of autumn, and their reveillé is the robin's limpid song. But the border world of late July is overflowed with radiant colour-waves of Indian pink and Shirley poppy, marigold and sweet sultan; it is pied with the annual summer chrysanthemums' dainty, many-coloured discs. Mignonette and stock mingle their delicate perfumes



THE PERGOLA.

(From a photo by Lady Harmsworth.)

with the wild honey of the pale scabious stars, lavender, and primrose, and of their dark companion of fragrant cottage-garden memory, the old red scabious, or "Betty's Pincushion," that looks for all the world like a heap of clustered garnets. But it is not on cottage gardens alone that the scabious' scent grows eloquent; close your eyes for a moment and the green walls of a deep lane encompass you, or, should a cool waft of the summer wind take you unawares, you may seem to feel beneath your feet the velvet turf of broad rolling downs and to breathe the flying airs of those high solitudes.

And for sheer sweetness what imaginable odour could rival the hedges of sweet-peas that fly their frail garlands with so exquisite a grace on either side the orchard alleys and climb in trailing clouds of glory on the trellis. Indeed, I have sometimes been moved to wonder as to whether, given a less complaisant nature, the sweet-pea might not boast as opulent a following as the orchid.

No lovelier range of colours could there be—from the blackest grape-purple to tenderest blue, from purest carmine to clear rose and faintest blush, rich bronze to orange, sulphur to cream and white, peach to pale shell-pink, they sing together like the morning stars. Some, of course, are variously winged, while others are freaked and flushed and shaded in such a butterfly host of pretty dyes as might well bewilder the vision and render choice a mere futility. It were best to sow them all. Fortunately they are not coy, and a reasonable amount of courtship will be richly rewarded. I am well pleased that for this season I took thought beforehand to

neighbour them with filmy bushes of the white gauze-flower—"bushes," say I, but that is all too substantial a word to stand sponsor to so aërial a growth, and still I cannot think upon a better. One may, however, more fitly figure forth the spectral beauty of them as ghosts of white flowers that have lived and died come back to haunt the garden close with misty memories.

To my mind the annual larkspur, with its spires of rich empurpled blue, of rosy lilac and of white, is one of my most pleasing guests; but it is the imperial blue alone that I have chosen to decorate the moon-shaped bed before the little would-be Ionic temple that serves for summer parlour here. These almost iridescent blossoms I have mingled, and as it seems to me not unwisely, with the golds and bronzes in varying dusks and lustres of the free-flowering calliopsis, and gartered the enchanted isle with a fine festoon of amber and saffron nasturtiums. That is my most intimate approach towards carpet-bedding, and it is good, and very good, but it is my Ultima Thule. I shall go no farther. Yet another annual that stands high in my good graces is the dainty carnation margarita, and I feel liberally repaid for the mid-February sowing which has brought me such a harvest; so fresh and fair are these Princesses du Pays de Porcelaine, with their bright delicate dyes, and fringed, spice-scented court-dresses.

Nor are carnations of the more steadfast sort a-wanting; seedlings these, but none of my sowing; they hail from the potting sheds of the expert, unnamed products of his skilful hybridisation. It pleases me better to purchase them thus in sturdy clumps with the undying

charm of the *imprévu*, so to speak, thrown in, than as slender, aristocratic layers, costly, and "true to name" indeed, but with none of the superb abundance, and far less vigour of habit than is exhibited by my full and radiant sheaves. I would say to you, if you, too, have a liking for carnations, and, with myself, are no precisian, "go to one of the few really distinguished growers and induce him to sell you some out of his sturdy store of untitled seedlings." The strain will be above reproach, while you will prove all the pleasures of expecting the delightful unknown.

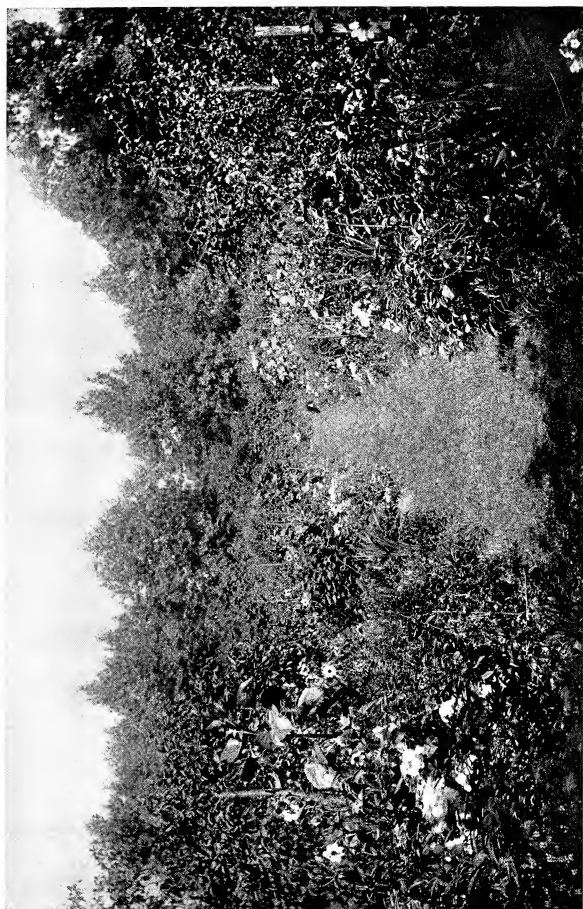
My carnation borders are entirely charming with their innumerable soft blots of coral and cherry, Persian pink, Venetian red, white, lemon, sharp carmine, and dusky rose all scattered upon a field of dim grey-green that has far more of grey in it than green. Marvellously beautiful too are my few that own their patents of nobility, the gorgeous yellow "selfs," "bizarres," and "flakes." The picotees alone are things to wonder on; some fairy artificer surely it was who rimmed each ivory-textured petal with so exquisite a pencilling of colour. What an unerring hand it is, and how miraculous a flair for the *mot juste* in harmonies of hue. No fine ivories of Japan, no miniature triumphs of art of the City of Lilies could approach such perfection as this; the worst, or quite possibly the best, of this is that these beautiful things must pass so soon, leaving no derelicts for time to tarnish.

The stately incense-breathing Mary-lilies are faded and fallen from their tall stems, but the sweet-smelling trumpet-lily, the longiflorum, is generously and beautifully

with us in all its sculptured grace and plenitude of bloom; while, for us open-air gardeners at least, the best of the lily season is yet to be.

One cannot but lament a little the effects of drouth and burning sun-rays together upon the earlier phloxes; they are blossoming as bravely as they may in purple and red, in white and mauve and lilac, yet, for all their fortitude, these are but wan and withered faces that they lift piteous to the broad skies of noon. Far otherwise is it with the hollyhocks that rise one above the other in triumphal array against solemn backgrounds of clipped yew and box. It is in the evening hours, I think, that they look their very best; for then the almost iridescent qualities of the open cups, the cool, clear green of bud and leaf and stalk, win added value from the lessening light. Once more the vision of ancient casements of stained glass swims into ken. Tall, slender spires of jade and chrysoprase, they sway this way and that in the slow evening breeze, set with their many chalices of clouded crystal. Some are coloured like amethysts, and some like roses; others show translucent dyes of apricot and lemon, saffron and topaz and pearl, while not the least enchanting are those that shimmer vaguely, white as the high moon, shot through with dim, faint stains of green, or blush, or palest amber.

If sunset enhances the glory of the holly-hock, then twilight holds indeed a magic wand for the *Œnothera*, that strange flower which masquerades as a beggar-maid all day, and shines forth a fairy princess at fall of dusk. Who could imagine, looking on the drooping foliage,



FLOWERS OF EVERY COLOUR

the faded fineries that are her only daylight wear, that the gloaming hour should find her thus transfigured? It is the story of Cendrillon over again—she who was the shabby cinder-wench in the heat of the sun, puts on her gown that is like sun, moon, and stars in one at the fairy-godmother's bidding. I, for my part, incline to disbelief in the old tale as the story-books tell it, and to think the conventional close must have been merely a benevolent concession to our universal desire for happy endings. Believe me, that particular fairy-godmother was more than common wise, and out of her knowledge that princes may be sometimes disappointing, you may depend upon it that she rapt Princess Cendrillon away from the very steps of the throne itself and changed her into the Princess *Ænothera* instead.

There is a conspiracy of silence between the birds and the roses from about the middle of July. The music of the feathered garden-folk and the blossoming fragrance of the rose-plots have ceased, as it were, together, as by some secret mutual understanding.

They have vanished away, and gone where the lost Aprils are and the lost Mays; and, although the breath of earliest autumn will presently awake many of the roses from their enchanted sleep, there will be none to sing to them.

Opening anew in the cool dawn of the year's decline, opening, as they will, to their very best of colour and of beauty under the pearl and silver of veiled skies, there seems something of mystery, of strangeness, in the hushed moment of their return. The mood of the season is touched to reverie.

You may almost figure it as brooding contemplative, like my stone garden god beneath the dark ilex in the rose-garden, dreaming, finger on lip, in this summer silence that breathes almost such slumberous airs as may have moved within the Sleeping Beauty's palace; the birds stir between green boughs, among flowering bushes, furtive, confused, as in an ambushade. There is even a certain stealthy flutter of indignation in their attitude, especially where the blackbird is concerned.

"Tck, tck, tck," he cries, surprised and angry; and I vow I can all but catch a glimpse of black cloak and sombrero as he flaps into some deeper shelter still. And yet, although the minnesingers' golden lutes are laid aside, and sunrise and sunset alike find the pleasure silent still, that very quality of silence wears a charm of its own—a quiet expectancy that seems full of vague and exquisite promise.

The season of mists and mellow fruitfulness is near at hand, while, in the meantime, pure, rich chords of colour sing from border and plot in heavenly harmonies, with now and again some sudden note of discord that yet is not discordant in reality, but only eloquent of the *imprévu*. The clear enamels of the turbaned zinnias, trooping all together, are amazingly pleasant to the appreciative gazer. This is no flower of sentiment any more than its clean and hearty forerunner, the pyrethrum, or its close follower, the radiant dahlia. It is just a joy of clear and candid colour, a feast in itself of gorgeous gaiety, dear to the eye that is as sensitive to strictly decorative beauty as to that floral loveliness which combines æsthetic qualities and the traditions of human emotion in one.



A SUMMER BORDER.

I cannot, for my own part, picture sweethearts exchanging love tokens of zinnias in the scented twilight, nor can I any the more forthshadow their pressed petals fluttering after the usual manner from the leaves of an ancient volume, years after, with any kind of effect. Certain flowers there are (and, maybe the sweetest) clothed in sentiment as with a garment, and to these one renders all due homage and affection.

But it seems to me that there is quite a considerable amount of space in the garden, as in everyday life, for other sorts of poetry, and that if one confined one's horticultural operations solely to the flowers approved by the conventions of romance, one's borders might be dull indeed.

Violets, lilies, roses, heliotrope, and the whole fragrant host hallowed by immemorial association—how poor the parterre would be without them. How yet immeasurably poorer without those multitudinous blossoms that stand for beauty of form or colour, or for both, and are ignored, and even upon occasion flouted, by the devout lover of the acknowledged flower of sentiment alone. I plucked my fairest pyrethrums once, and made of them a constellation of pearliest pinks, most milky whites, delicate amethysts, and glowing glints of coral and ruby when Eugenio was bidden to luncheon in the shade of the vine-wreathed pergola.

In a pleasant, portly jar of ancient blue and white Delft they charmed, or so it seemed to me, ever so wisely. Clean as daisies and pure as porcelain of the tenderest *pâte*, they filled one soul with pride if not with glee. But my guest would have none of them.

That was not, he said, his idea of a flower. Flowers stood somehow for something different in his imagination. The colours were indisputably good, but no—there was a lack; a something, in fact, that fixed a great gulf between his sympathies and my enthusiasm.

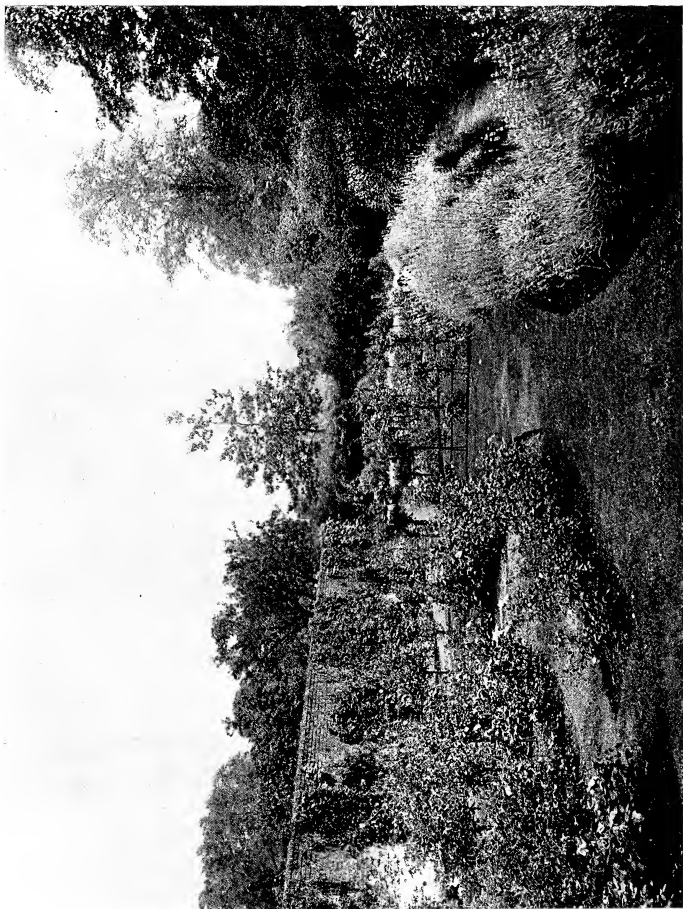
What, oh what, does his garden grow? I should like well to see Eugenio's garden.

There is Preciosa, again, who will have no truck with any but single flowers; the only double blossom that she can by any means endure is a rose, and, even so, she is for ever regretting that the simple, heraldic Tudor rose does not reign alone. The abounding riot of colour in my broad borders is almost painful to her, I know.

Springtime is the best season for her visits; I have so many more single flowers then, and it is quite possible to divert her somewhat abstracted gaze from my full-frocked phœnixes and daffydownillies as we pass.

Felicia, on the other hand, is the easiest creature in the world to please; to her gentle heart every flower that blows is kindly welcome. There have even been occasions when—for she has no garden of her own—I have discovered her delicate old Nankin vases and frail Venetian goblets decked out with trails of almond-scented wild convolvulus, white and green-flecked shepherd's purse, and innocent blue-eyed speedwell, to say nothing of light tall fronds of wayside grasses.

In her kind sight I am the soul and essence of reckless generosity, because at this season of the year I am apt to turn her adrift, scissors in hand, amid my frail-garlanded aisles and islands of the many-hued



THE LAVENDER WALK

sweet-pea, and this in spite of my reiterated and truthful assurance that it is she and not I that confers the benefit, inasmuch as her timely harvesting puts back the period of seed-time, and prolongs the flowery season for yet a little while.

One can hardly accuse this present year of a too great extravagance of sunshine; indeed, I have heard the suggestion of niggardliness raised more than once. Yet, in spite of all, even in face of the pale green cheeks of my unsunned tomatoes, that refuse so stoutly to incarnadine, I am well pleased with the pageant it has shown me. Never, through the best and most miraculous years that I have witnessed has the subtle and intimate charm of colour been so fully revealed to me.

'Tis the grey light shows the colour; I know it well now. The splendid alembic of the sunshine fuses, glorifies; confers a glory, as a sovereign may bestow prizes of rank and state. But the pale radiance of a pearl-grey day differentiates and discloses with the selective power of the true artist.

It is realism, an you will; but here at least, is the dream fulfilled of one who, maybe, was no realist, and yet all the better poet in that he discerned finely and told finely of that which he saw. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," is the very device for a fair grey day.

THE robin sings in the rain, and the first leaves fall,
Withering sun-flowers fling their tarnished gold
by the wall,
Hedge-fruits ripen and drop in coppice and lane,
And I am glad from my heart that the years return not
again.

May-flowers fade with the May, and are past and gone,
Butterflies live their day, and the year goes on :
Yet the heart that was blithe with the flower and the
butterfly
Lingers, and lives, and outlives, while the years go by.

The end of the tale is best, and the close of the song
For the heart that has beat too fast, that has beat too
long ;
And my heart is glad that the years return not again—
Glad that the first leaves fall and the robin sings in the
rain.

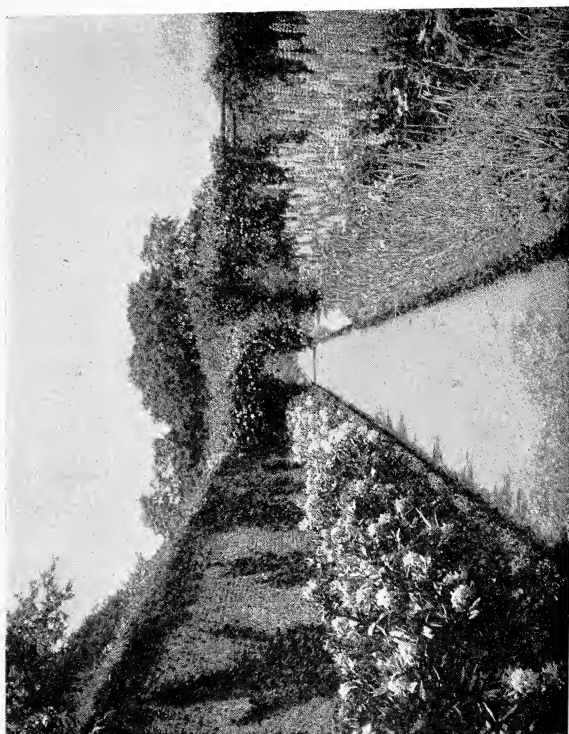
THE BREATH OF AUTUMN

IF April and May, as the old Spanish saw has it, are the keys of the year, then surely August might be said to figure as its golden coffer, open wide, and overflowing with a superfluity of treasure—the year's richest, although, maybe, not of its best. It is almost as though the season were over-weighted with its own pomp, and moved to statelier rhythms—an imperial masquer, robed in cloth of gold that is stiff with gems, treading the grandiose measure of the pavane rather than the airy intricacies of gavotte or minuet. Opulence and majesty inform the present hour, touching it, as it were, to a certain solemnity—inevitable burden of wealth and state, even though the treasure be but this fæiry gold that early frosts shall wither and autumn mists dissolve. Now that the great summer silence has descended upon the garden, the robin is beginning his *aubade* to autumn; but he does little more than practise it as yet, at intervals, now and again as the spirit moves him.

Sweet and clear, almost as tuneless as the ripple of a stream or the sound of sheep-bells floating down from high hill pastures, is this limpid song that stirs you to a vague sense of melancholy as you listen. It is the self-same song that we shall hear over and over when ash-tree keys hang rusty on the boughs, and again, when boughs are bare, and low gold sunsets of the dying year shall be all that remain of its glories.

We shall be grateful enough in those days for his shrill, pure notes, but, for the moment, one is almost

unconsciously touched by their inopportunity ; it is, so to speak, the *memento mori* that they seem to chant before the time. Out upon the moor and all along the heath-land, brakes, and hedges, the yellow-hammer flits and twitters forth his "Kiss me, quick, quick, quick, and go, *plea-ea-ease*," a light-winged Ariel of the wilderness ; and his oft-sung madrigal is as full of pleasant cheer as the songs that William Blake's shepherd went piping down the valleys wild. But he is no garden visitant, so we must even bid welcome to our robin, and prepare to make the most of what we yet may spend, undismayed by the vision he has conjured up before us. The sun shines, the roses are beginning to blossom anew ; there is an abundance of leafage upon the trees ; summer is with us still, and the garden's lease of gaiety does not close for many a long day yet. Indeed, for sheer radiance and riot of colouring, I am not by any means assured that this is not the brightest hour of all. A glance at the zinnia beds alone should go far towards carrying conviction as to this, and drowning any lingering pessimistic sentiments under deep seas of glowing colour. It is a mosaic of barbaric splendour that they present with their turbaned, or curled, heads, standing up proudly in the strong sunshine. Dusky orange, sharp carmine, saffron, china-pink, rose du Barri, purple, white, and frankest of vermilions, they grow together gaudy and unashamed, with something of the magnificence, I think, of the old-time courts of Indian kings. Scarcely less brilliant of hue are the gaillardias that help to glorify the broad herbaceous borders with all manner of sunset stains.



PEONIES AND LUPINES.
(From a photo by Lady Hamsworth.)

Undimmed by drought, robust as they are beautiful, these great red and golden daisies play their part royally in the year's pageant. Nor is this their only wear. On the contrary, I find it hard to keep count of their varieties, that range from pure, pale gold to bronze, from orange-scarlet to copper. Some are ringed and fringed with rich dyes of carbuncle and dark rose, others bloom blood-red with dim emblazonings of amber, while not the least beautiful shows a fine disc of topaz-yellow petals set round about a heart of ebony.

Although spring begins the garden's Age of Gold, it is left for late summer to play King Midas to perfection, bringing into being these hosts of stately, scentless flowers that gild the parterre with a stronger and more mundane lustre than that which lit those early idyllic days. The splendours of the Sunflower, Autumn's Oriflamme as one might call it, are unfolding more fully day by day in gorgeous multiplicities of shape and tone and stature. Here are perennials and annuals, tall and short, massive and slender, shining like golden pomegranates of Eden through open spaces of the wild garden, and making sunlight in the shady places of the shrubberies. On the kitchen-garden also they confer an air of lordly pleasuring, for I like well to see their rich crowns neighbouring my tall green scarlet-threaded hedges of runner beans, or nodding high above the broad lush leafage and honey-coloured blossoms of the trailing marrow. Prettiest, in my eyes at least, of all perennial sunflowers is the elegant *Harpalium*, the Prairie Sunflower, with its profusion of slim-petalled blooms of a pure full yellow, each centred with an

orange-tawny boss like the back of a humble-bee, and borne gracefully aloft upon light, strong stems of a certain purplish-black that makes for an indescribable effect of dignity to the grouping. While, among the annuals, where choice seems, perhaps, more difficult, mine alights with but little hesitation upon the *Lenticularis*, whose lofty branching growth, exquisitely curved foliage, and bright, dark-centred flowers are eloquent of vigour and beauty alike. In a multitude of Sunflowers, however, there is undoubtedly wisdom; wherefore, although I have—as who would not?—my favourites, I use ever a wide catholicity in my sowing, from the Cyclopean *Uniflorus* down to the comparatively insignificant *Cucumerifolius*, for variety's sake. Yet it is not for variety, but simply because of its own romantic merits, that the rare pale Moon-flower finds place here year upon year, expanding its silvery primrose-tinted petals beside the fuller radiance of its flamboyant kin. Another amber-robed divinity of the wild garden is the *Oenothera*, whose reign begins with twilight and ceases at sunrise. You would never dream, seeing her faded finery by day, of how through the dark hours the garden is all alight with her yellow lamps, but so it is. Mélisande, who supped with me in the loggia an evening or so since, was all remorse because, mistaking for weeds the humble-seeming seedlings, she had plucked all hers up, unwitting, in the spring, and thus must needs forego in her proper demesne this enchanted hour of soft and luminous colour. I have, I think, added something to the charm by a liberal inter-plantation of the *Nicotiana's* pearly trumpets that exhale a

perfume sweeter even than the white jasmine's upon the silence and the dusk. If only the nightingale were singing . . . but he will sing no more this year.

The little formal garden beyond the south terrace, with its leaden images and urns, that long ago were brave with gilding, owes its chiefest adornment just now to the goodly company of phloxes and asters, where-with the plots and borders smile discreetly fair. Against the sombre background of trim dark box and yew the frail loveliness of the phlox is very daintily arrayed. Milk-white and tender amethyst, faint hues of lavender and rosy-lilac, peach, and violet prevail amid this throng of softly clustered blossoms; there is I know not what of reticence, of gentle virginal pride, in the sentiment they would seem to express. To my mind they own somewhat of the air of delicate, well-born spinsters, no longer fair with the magic of first youth, but delightful still in remote, fastidious fashion; living on, as it were, in a cloud of serene memories through days of unruffled calm. At their feet, and within the many box-bordered beds that rejoice this quiet pleasaunce, the earth is all enamelled with asters of every kind and colour. One could almost think that the late chrysanthemums had forestalled their season, so liberal of growth and various of hue are some of these, more especially the pæony-flowered and the comet species. The quilled varieties have their own especial virtues, and I incline, with every season that passes, more and more to the belief that there is no aster which is not delightful, save only the extremely "dwarf"; but then, I cannot imagine any flower finding favour in my sight

after its reduction to that formula of dwarfness so dear to the gardener's heart. Whether the petals be reflexed, or incurved, or merely quilled—plain in their neatness—the aster's charm of variety is, I think, sensibly enhanced by judicious admixture, always provided that the scheme shall have been laid with a due appreciation of the exigencies of colour. As, for example, I would think shame to introduce the note of yellow, however mild, into that clear anemone-like symphony that opens, so to speak, upon an amaranth almost as poignant as magenta, and sings on through tender passages of rose and blues and lavenders and whites to rich chords of purple and red. No, I have set one bed with the yellow, fully intermingled with the snow-white, curly-locked blossom of its own stature; while elsewhere this same yellow aster figures again amid a maze of purples and lavenders interspersed with white; but I will have none of it in the great sonata. The Comet asters with striped petals, as pretty as delicate summer chintzes or ancient sprigged porcelain, have a plot to themselves near the grey stone basin of the fountain, so that one may upon occasion view their flowery field of lightly broken colour through a radiant mist of sun and flying spray.

Along the walks on either hand the borders are bright with a sweet disorder of diverse growths; the violas are faithful to their posts despite invading hosts of the nasturtium, which push long, lusty garlands of moon-shaped leaves and hooded flowers of every conceivable variant upon russet and amber, to say nothing of those that flaunt it in coral-pinks and reds, amid

their less assertive neighbours. The lovely butterfly gladioli, with their fair sister, the *gandavensis*, are growing in luminous sheaves between the dark, pointed leafage and uplifted white and rosy blossoms of the graceful Japanese anemone, while light wands of the blue and the white *Campanula pyramidalis* cluster together here and there at pleasant intervals. Behind these again, dahlias of the Single, the "Decorative," and the Cactus kinds fling fine splashes of colour, now bold, now delicate, all about their green towers. And, highest of all by far, behind the hedge of dahlias the tall holly-hocks have reared their jewel-fretted spires. These seem more wonderful this year than ever of old; why, I could not tell; but it may be that they owe some added splendours to the clouded translucence of their single cups. For I have finally discarded the double hollyhock as being altogether inferior in beauty as well as healthfulness to its simpler relative, whose generous growth and shining crystalline chalices by comparison make the crumpled rosettes that bedeck the more ornate variety cut a very unshapely figure indeed, for all their elaboration. Almost all those colours which make most instant appeal to the imagination in fruits and precious stones are here in exquisite quality of tone and texture; but it is at moments when the sun strikes these Sultan's Turrets with a shaft of light that the full enchantment of them is disclosed. Some are hued like apple-blossom and pearl, some blush with the rose complexion of the peach, others show the pale primrose of melons, dimly distained with faintest green; some there are like living opals,

lustrously milk-white, shot through with shifting flame, while, as for the deeper dyes, dark wine-colour with amethystine gleams, and a rich multitude of carbuncles and crimsons strike stately chords.

Loitering among all this riot of fine, unfragrant autumnal flowers, it is with a sensible touch of regret that I realise afresh that the carnations and picotees are gone. The pretty annual *Margaritæ*, the fantastic Bizarres and Flakes, the dainty Fancies and Picotees, the lovely simplicities of the Selfs, all these are gone by with their glories of colour and perfume; their withered brown heads have been duly shorn away by the inexorable scissors, and the somewhat uninspiring task of layering is done. One thing at least is certain, and that is my firm determination to gather in a goodly store of unnamed seedlings from the expert's laboratory in the spring; by reason, firstly, of the profuse generosity of their habit, secondly, because of the eternal fascination—for me, at least—held by the unknown. In this matter there can be no question of a surprise that shall not be a happy one: in the seedling Carnation lottery it is all prizes and no blanks; the prizes may differ as to magnitude, but each will be well worth the growing.

I sometimes think that the world in general is scarce sufficiently alive to the great and gracious ways of the clematis, or I should rather perhaps have said, to its fertile versatility and long fidelity. There are, of course, but few, if any, gardens that harbour not the better-known purple *Jackmanni* with their wealth of blooms; but with the *Viticella* and the *Lanuginosa* groups the popular taste is less freely conversant. For my part, it



THE WAY TO THE WATER-GARDEN.



is on the Lanuginosa varieties that all my fancy dwells; the grand scale on which their blossoms are planned attracts me vastly, while the silvery lavenders and mauves that are their most usual wear are singularly pure in tone. Their principal enemy for the moment is the irrepressible earwig, against whom I and the Wuzeer have for once joined issue and made common cause. I am told by my friend Candida that the earwig is a pattern of all imaginable domestic virtues. I do not dispute it; my Lady the Earwig may be an uncanonised saint for aught I know or care; my sole acquaintance with her and her multitudinous brood is bounded by the abomination of their misdeeds. By their works I know them: luxuriant leafage riddled through and through, hanging unsightly; admired blossoms half-devoured, left to rust and ruin on the spray. The earwig may quite possibly be the fondest parent the world has known; she is certainly the most indefatigable of marplots, and were it not for our many *caches* of short hollow pieces of bamboo niched subtly here and there in pergola and trellis, and orchard wall to boot, both fruits and flowers would be sadly to seek.

“Red rose leaves will never make wine,” it is true, but the damask petals of my second rose-harvest of Jacqueminots, together with the pink and silver tribute of La France, are to lay the fragrant foundations of the very best pot-pourri that is yet to be made. The last was good, and very good; and still, with the rose-jar, it is always the next time that must excel all other essays. One half of my sweet-scented spoils bestrews the yellow marble pavement of the loggia, while the

other suns itself in fragile, shell-like showers upon the summer-parlour's floor of glossy Indian teak which mirrors back the frail image as in a glass darkly. To watch the rose-garden enter upon its second youth is almost to restore the illusion of lost spring, it is so lovely and so temperate. You have not, to be sure, the same profusion, but the individuals are beyond praise, and it is only the very fittest, the loveliest, and the best, that partake this renascent spring. The *Niphetos*, the shy trafficker, is never over-prodigo of its pearls, but what liberality may lack perfection amply indemnifies; while prodigality and perfectness alike play fairy god-mother to the admirable Viscountess Folkestone, one of the most desirable of that all-desirable race, the hybrid Teas. The faintly pink-tinted pearl colour of the imbricated form, the gracious abundance of blossom, the delightful and enduring fragrance, combine to render this a rose that every garden-lover should cherish and grow not singly but in numbers. Some of the same virtues are shared by the lovely Lady Mary Fitzwilliam, which is also tricked out bravely in new bloom; while steadfast and profuse as always, those standards and bushes that bear the incarnadined ivory cups of the Grace Darling are an equal refreshment to both sense and sight. The pretty *Boule de Neige*, that claims fragrant kinship with the *Noisettes*, shows itself less whimsically inclined now than in the spring; it is very lavish of its almost camellia-shaped white flowers, and its latest vagary has taken the by no means unpleasing form of a blossom markedly suffused with pink. Perhaps she is blushing for her many past caprices.

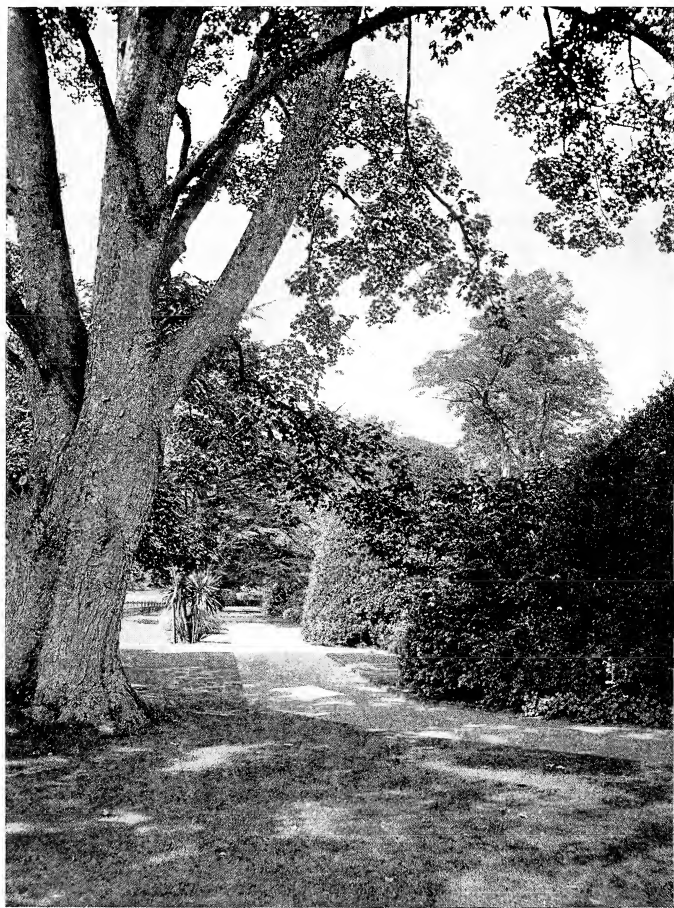


IN THE WATER-GARDEN.

Who knows? But, whether or not, the blush is vastly becoming.

The Gloire Lyonnaise, Francesca Kruger, and Caroline Custer are in full beauty once again, as also the fair and fragrant La France in all her fresh braveries of pink and silver; the Jacqueminot's buds and blossoms are opening with that especial dusky bloom, like red wine gleaming through translucent goblets of still deeper red, which is one of its rarest qualities. Here, too, the pergola is clothed afresh with orange and amber glories of the William Allen Richardson, and snowed upon from climbing garlands of Aimée Vibert; while the high south wall of grey and ancient stone is touched to tenderest beauty by the pale alabaster of the moon-shaped Lamarque and the fine gold of Maréchal Niel. A trespassing trail of Morning Glory has stolen its surreptitious way along the tall hedge of those summer roses whose blossoming time is over for this year, and waves its white and azure trumpets in triumph upon the summit, a welcome intruder upon the monotony of that dull arras whose bright embroideries endured so brief a while. Among such a renaissance of fair colours and sweet scents there is little room for remembrance or regret, and it is only this barren screen of foliage that bears witness to the death of the summer roses, their elegy and monument in one. It is to the little China roses—the Roses Bengales of M. François Coppée—that one must look for unfailing fidelity and delicate gaiety of spirit: they are so constant to me and so kind, and even the first onslaughts of the frost have but little power upon their frail porcelain beauty. But one

should not so much as breathe the name of frost as yet; it is in a sense a tempting of Providence, and late summer has many good days in store for us still. The swallows skim, now low, now high, above the rose-garden, the sun-dial has daily but a few less shining hours to number, bats flit busily in the dim blue dusk, and roses are in bloom. It is far too early even to dream of frost.



SUN AND SHADE.



GAY antirrhinums, powdered, striped, and freaked,
Laugh down the garden ways in motley wise,
Rose-lipped, white-throated, blushing cherry-cheeked
Some—and the rest like summer butterflies.

Ah, but they fail beneath the autumn sun,
The low gold sunsets of the dying year ;
For Summer wanes—for Summer's lease is run ;
Autumn is come, and Winter waits anear.

The threat takes form, the lurking Fate's revealed :
Lo, undisguised, stark symbol of the tomb,
Or ever the hordes of Winter take the field—
The bare brown skull behind the mask of bloom.

THE RIPENING AUTUMN

Now that the gate of summer is closed against us in good earnest, and autumn, like the angel of the flaming sword, bars the backward glance with splendours all his own, flooding the quiet days with such strange glories as summer never knew; now, almost insensibly, we pause upon the slope, lingering, recounting leisurely the pleasures that still remain to us, telling the tale of the year's heritage. Here, in the little summer of St. Luke, upon this gentle eminence of mild mid-autumn, hung about with its leafy tapestries of russets and pale amber and dusky gold, through which the low sun peers more clearly day by day, it is surely one of the pleasantest of tasks to reckon up the riches we have gathered in.

The robin is piping on his crystal flute an air so delicately sweet that you are well-nigh persuaded for the moment that spring has risen from her grassy tomb; the thrush also is dreaming of spring, and every now and again will sing you a lilting passage, as it were, from the mellow depths of his dream.

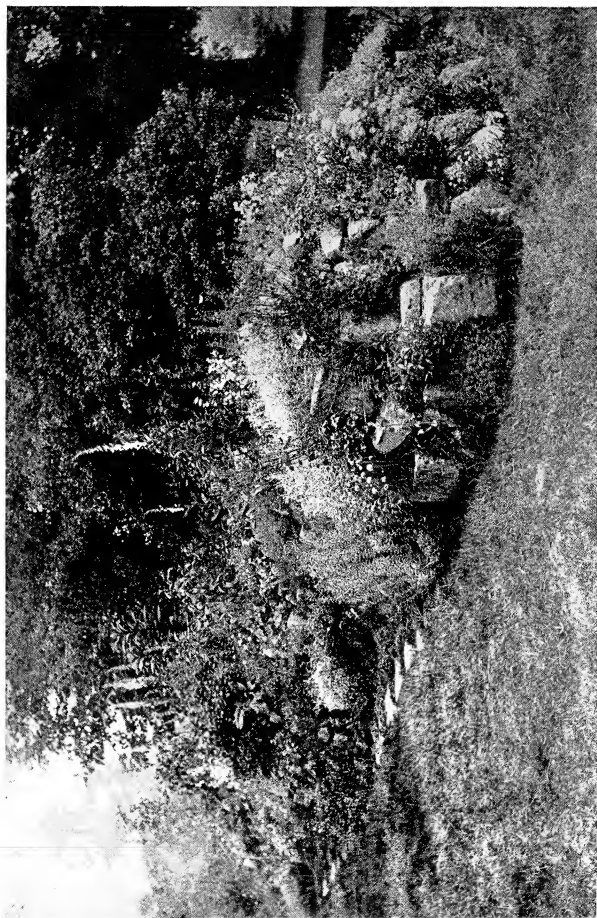
The apple-chamber in the loft has been freshly swept, garnished anew with whitewashing, and spread with pale sparkling yellow straw for the ruddy and the yet green fruits to repose upon, some to ripen for next month, some for even so late as Christmas and beyond.

This is not a good apple season, but we shall have enough and to spare, and there are plenty of pears; above all, the nut-brown Calabash that ripens in late October, and the musky, jade-coloured Uvedale St.

Germain that will only reach perfection in the cold early months of next year, promise a most admirable abundance. In this, the sundown of the year, there is much, very much, for enjoyment, and for me the sovereign delight of all, for sense and sensibility alike, resides in that long, shadowy chamber, low-eaved and dimly lit, perfumed like the garden of the Hesperides and the pleasaunce of Armida joined in one.

The key of it, as it hangs upon the bunch among the other garden keys, looks in no wise different from its neighbours, the same modest regard distinguishes them all; you would hardly imagine that this prosaic little object was the Open Sesame of a veritable treasure house. But climb with me up the steep flight of wooden stairs, pass through the white-walled ante-room, and turn the key in its proper padlock, and I will honestly engage to forfeit the fine flower of my choicest shelves if you pronounce me to have been extravagant of praise.

You would think, as the heavy door turns on its hinges, that the fragrance of many and many a long fine summer must inhabit here, embalmed in this brown gloaming, and not fragrance alone, but the infinite charm of rich and varied colour. Side by side, upon the long and narrow shelves that rise, tier above ghostly tier, through the scented twilight of the fruit gallery, repose the garnered treasures of the orchard—"all March begun with, April's endeavour," and still for all these many years that I have watched the same miracle unfold afresh, it remains for me as full as ever of wonder and rejoicing. From blunt bronze or silvery



WHERE THE ROCK-PLANTS LIE.



fruit-bud to faëry seas of blossom, and thence to these ruddy and golden globes—believe me, the miracle is a miracle yet. Blown by all the winds that pass, and wet with all the showers, how should this harvest not be impregnated through and through with the very spirit and soul of summer, the divine breath of the open air.

Here, as everywhere, there are differences and distinctions; more, it may be, than the casual purchaser who falls under the easy spell of the fruiterer's gay window-pane may realise.

An apple on the basket's rim, a yellow (or rosy) apple is to him, and it is nothing more. But we know better, you and I, as, basket on arm, we stand in serene contemplation between the laden shelves; this huge primrose-hued pear, for instance, of long and graceful shape, is the famous Marie Louise, and this is the precise period when it is at its best. My friend the Expert will tell you, and rightly, that it is the queen of dessert pears, while the dainty, rosy, little Louise Bonne de Jersey, which plays soubrette, so to speak, to this great lady, comes next in order of merit among those that are ripe now. And, theoretically speaking, I hold him to be absolutely in the right; it is only that I have myself so cowardly a palate as to shrink somewhat from the very slight and delicate acidity which to connoisseurs forms one of Marie Louise's chiefest charms, and to willingly decline upon the softer, more suave attractions of Louise Bonne, and others of humbler degree.

On this lower shelf lies a group of Urbaniste, smaller than my last season's yield, sturdy green pears, almost Dutch in contour, and lightly pitted with bronze.

You would say, perhaps, that their hour was not yet come; but sometimes still appearances deceive, and should you take heart to brave the experience, you will seem to be feasting upon a species of ambrosia served through a medium of scented snow. The next tier is full almost to overflowing with slender forms of the nut-brown Calabash, or *Beurre Busc*, to my way of thinking one of the sweetest pears that grows, and its cousin, the *Belle Julie*, whose dark rind is flushed with a strain of gold, and whose flavour is, perhaps, of a somewhat fuller quality. Here, again, is the delightful *Beurre Hardy*, whose honeyed savour touches the imagination to thoughts of imprisoned sunlight and dew, and the breath of late-blowing roses.

Just opposite are stored the apples, in dull, rich mosaics of amaranth and rose and gold; the old *Ribston Pippin*, with dusky complexion and golden-tinged crystalline flesh, set by for Christmas; the *Claygate Pearmain*, with rougher and more russet skin, but otherwise almost the *Ribston's* twin for form and quality; and the bright-cheeked *King of the Pippins*, so like the *Ribston* save in the glossy sheen of its rind and the differently modelled apex. Further on shine the little lemon yellow *Ingestres*, the gorgeously golden *Flower of Kent*, with many another beside; and, last of all, the homely *Rymer*, darkly green and streaked with faded red, which is to furnish me with all the pies I may need until next blossom-time.

But, indeed, this pleasant loft is not my only happy hunting-ground; I have another resort for such times when my mind is set upon a wider range of choice.

There is a certain ancient high-walled garden neighbouring my own, and in the midst of it is set a long, low building, whose dim and fragrant aisles are filled with all sorts and conditions of fruit, rare and ordinary, new and old. My friend the Expert is custodian here, and it is here that I come to supply a vacancy, to solve a difficulty, to decide the doubtful point. Here is the great reserve of Cox's Orange Pippin, dull-speckled bronze without, golden within, best of all apples for dessert; here, too, lie serried rows of, I can but believe, every apple under the sun, to say nothing of the pears.

My own pride shrinks as I pass between the shelves that rise one above another from floor to ceiling. Here is wealth indeed—wealth and a moral—and the moral of this is, in the formula of Alice's immemorial Duchess, that "handsome is as handsome does," for it is but seldom the comeliest fruit that triumphs through taste and fidelity.

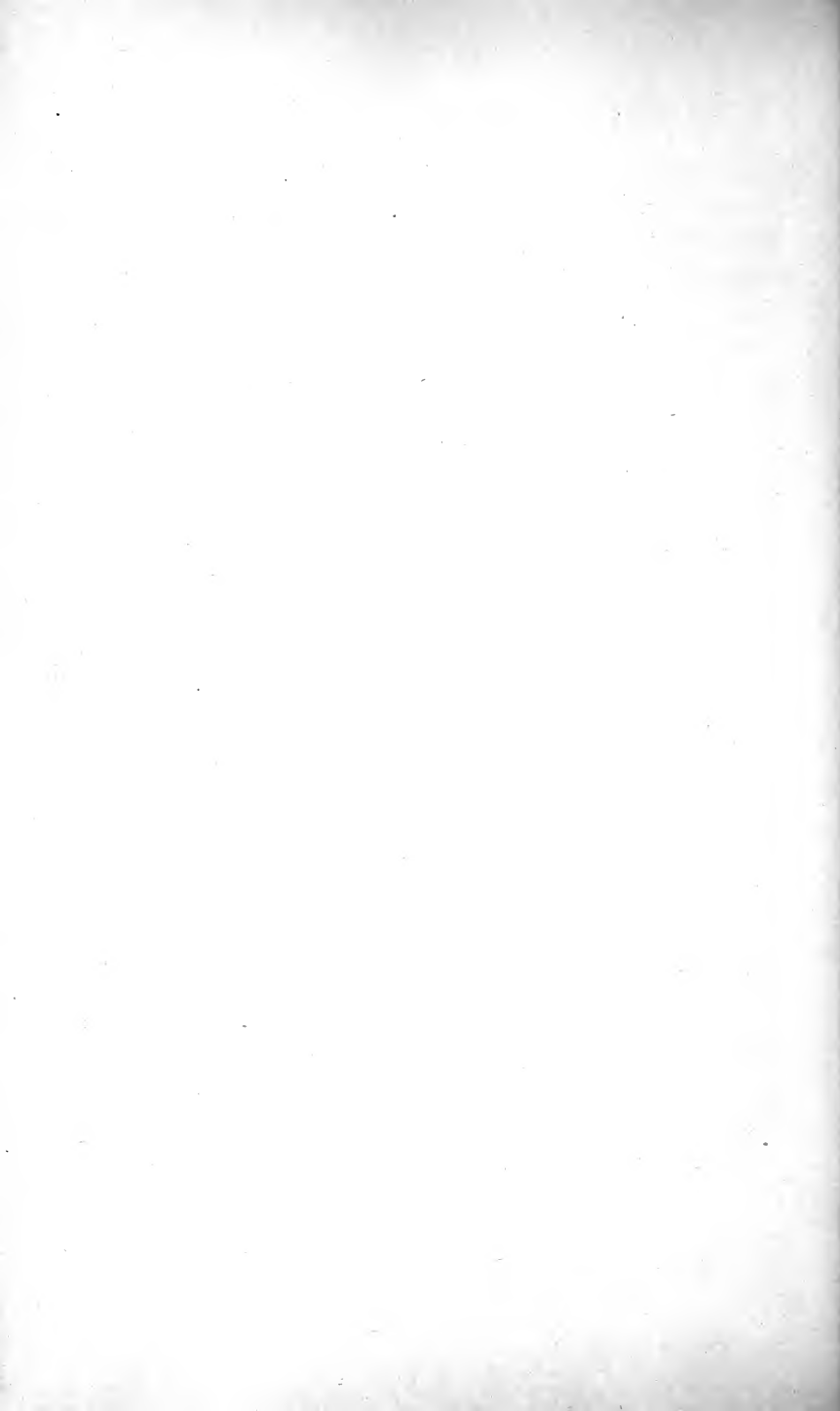
There is, as yet, but little change in the general aspect of the garden; the parterre is still gay in gala dress with its many-coloured autumn flowers, the wilderness blossoms in a brilliant rout of blue and gold and purple; but the tits have begun their airy assaults upon the seeding sunflowers, the swallows are holding their restless Parliaments round the high gables, while in every plot, however watched and tended, you will find some symbol of the fall. Here a dry pod, there a casque discrowned, and now again those little mocking brown skulls that lurk behind the antirrhinums' fair flower-faces show themselves, furtively eloquent of the end. I smell the mould above the rose; the year has

received its warning. To be sure, in the country the signals of decay are hardly manifest, for here the seasons come belated, and winter makes a tardier approach than in the town. Leaves are not yet discoloured, although the heavier gloom of the great elms forebodes the year's mourning, and the hedgerows are still fresh to the eye, studded with red rose berries and hung with green garlands of that Mænad of the wild, the vine-like briony.

Here in my rose-garden does hope still inhabit, and most conspicuously abundant of all are the Noisettes. William Allen Richardson is regally generous with his tapestries of cloth of gold; Aimée Vibert showers her store of fragrant milk-white blossoms abroad in liberal largesse; the pretty *Boule de Neige* has forgotten her whimsies and is fully bedecked with virginal cups of snow. But the *Maréchal Niel* is sparing, almost niggardly, of his lovely lemon-coloured blooms; you would almost think he feared to lose in dignity by a too great familiarity of habit. *L'Idéal*, strangest of Noisettes, shows a wealth of lustrous copper-tinted buds whose somewhat metallic hues are apt to provoke in me sentiments of surprise rather than affection. It is odd, it is un-rose-like, and I harbour it mainly out of friendliness for *Araminta*, whose garden-ground does not favour the growth of roses. So many folk have taken it for artificial, she tells me, when adorning her hair or her bosom, that it has completely won her heart, although it shares, with others of its kindred Teas, the common fault of ineffectiveness when fully blown. They are all in the same tale. *Perle des Jardins*,



IN THE ROCK GARDEN.



Safrano, the exquisite pale amber Caroline Custer, the frail pink Catherine Mermet, with many another beside; the implicit perfection of the long slim bud unfolding changes to a thin shallow flower, weak-petalled and without distinction. They give up their secret, and you straightway discover that there was nothing to tell; their silence was indeed golden, but disclosure and disillusion here go hand-in-hand. The stalwart Souvenir d'un Ami is blossoming bravely once again with a plenitude of rosy blooms and strong glossy foliage; yet here also the difference between the bud and the full-blown flower might be likened to that between early May and late July. Performance has almost never the enchantment of promise, and so I gather my rose-buds while I may, well pleased with their present loveliness and the magic of the moment.

I do not think that I could set my affections very steadfastly upon any rose that was not what rosarians call "a good autumnal," or, perhaps, remembering the brief glories of those whose sole season is early summer, I should rather say I like the good autumnals best, far best. The Jacqueminot's rich dark beauty and deep fragrance seem to charm more wisely than ever here at the imminent parting of the ways; they set me wondering as to whether that extinct and long-forgotten rose, the Red Glory, was justified of its fine title, which, to my mind at least, would grace my favourite full well. Fit, though few, are the late blossoms of the Gloire Lyonnaise, but Madame Gabriel Luizet makes ample amends for the less lavish givers with her profusion of clearest *rose-tendre* flowers, so charmingly imbricated, so

sound of heart, that, however widely they may open, their widest candour brings no sense of disenchantment. Long trails of Gloire de Dijon climb the pergola and cling about the western wall, and as my eye dwells—somewhat coldly, I admit—upon its portly blooms, I am moved once more to marvel at the great rosarian's choice. It was, if I remember rightly, Dean Hole who decided that, were he condemned to the companionship of but one rose in perpetuity, he would plead to be endowed with a strong plant of this same Gloire de Dijon, and even to this day I cannot fathom why it has been singled out for such high honour. It is enormously prolific, splendidly robust, magnificently generous of—what? For the most part, I maintain, of flowers amorphous as to form and indifferently coloured. It goes sadly against the grain to speak ill of any rose, but indeed I find little save the virtues of surety and quantity to recommend this over-rated tree. Towards the very end of the season, it is true, you may find that it has managed to produce some few elegantly-shaped, richly tinted buds; while all the rest of its time is busily employed in bringing to birth a profusion of large, ill-shapen sallow flowers for which I am profoundly ungrateful. No, rather let me leave that problematical dock with a lusty plant of the fair, pearly-pink Viscountess Folkestone; or, should the nature of my punishment forbid a choice so highly placed, give me the delicate *Princesse du Pays de Porcelaine*, the dainty Monthly Rose. It is chiefly, I think, as a parent that the Gloire de Dijon is most worthy of respect.

Although I am no great lover of dwarf varieties in any form, there are certain Polyantha roses of dwarf habit that are positively irresistible. I have planted a small oblong bed near the hedge of white Rugosa with alternate trees of Perle d'Or and Ma Paquerette, and the broidery of pure dense white and nankeen yellow clusters, woven, as it were, upon their field of luxuriant tiny green leafage, is very comely and reviving. Of the Bourbon Roses, the Souvenir de la Malmaison is still the one I like best. Its vigorous growth, its faintly blushing colour, and the sweet fragrance that exhales, like the breath of faded romance, from the shell-like petals, all serve to endear to me this placid, fragile survival from a strange and stormy time. The Man of Destiny and the exotic lady of his love are but mere names now—portions and parcels of the dreadful past, while the roses that her garden grew grow in mine to-day.

It is at this precise moment that the Japanese Anemones are at their very best. By reason of their encroaching disposition I have pitched their main camp in the wild garden, where they increase and flourish exceedingly; but, for all that, they still find place in the herbaceous borders, whose wide hospitalities seem almost too spacious for abuse. High above the pointed, sharp green foliage rise these delicate flowers, almost as simple of structure as the famous Tudor Rose of decorative fame; and, limited though their range of colour be, it is so refined in quality, so pearly-pure of tone, that you would scarce find it in your heart to wish for its extension. Ivory-white, ashes of roses, Persian pink,

and so on to rose-flushed white runs the short scale; short indeed, yet all delightful. The robin is a minnesinger of but few cadences, and just as you do not weary of hearing him sing them over and over, so, in like manner, there is no touch of monotony in these pleasant chords of narrow scope. Snow-white and rose-red, the little people of the ancient *Märchen* might well have been the fairy god-mothers of such blossoms as these.

The lilies are practically over and gone, although here a stray belated wand of white, green-striped Krätzeri, there a lingering sceptre of the stately Tiger Lily, stand in sheltered places, reminiscent of summer's pride. Gone are the majestic Browni, with its sculptured beauty, the splendid Auratum, the incense-bearing, snow-white Longiflorum, the Rubrum's lightly-frosted rose: one by one, almost as though by stealth, the long procession has passed before you are come to realise that for a long twelvemonth you shall see its blooms no more. Sceptre and crown must tumble down, and in the dust be equal made with the poor crooked scythe and spade. We shall be putting the scythe, or its noisy substitute, away ere long, for the grass begins already to spring with feebler impulse, and the season of the spade is soon to come—that sturdy republican who shall dethrone the reigning flowers and prepare the way for the next dynasty.

But the autumn fires are not yet lit, and Dahlia and Aster and the tall Star-worts, the little flowers of St. Michael, fill my garden with their transitory pomp. Violet and blue, amethyst, pink, topaz, pearl, gold and



POND-LILIES.

silver, greyest lavender, with a host of other kindred hues, crown the high clusters of the Michaelmas Daisy, most ærial of autumn flowers; while its antithesis, the buxom Dahlia, versatile as ever, now plump and prim as an Abigail's pincushion in pretty Dresden-china tints, now aflame, angry and brave, with long twisted petal and martial complexion, holds its own as boldly as of old in autumns past. Some of its tenderer hues, primrose and apricot, blush and fawn and lilac, mingle pleasantly with the more freakish blossoms that wear the motley of variegated shapes. Single and double, Cactus, Pompon, and "Decorative," all are gay, all are as finely bedizened and tricked out as long-dead City matrons of a showier day, when Vauxhall was all the rage, and three in the afternoon the modish dinner-hour. They are gay, they are respectable, they are eminently robust, but, somehow, I cannot love them. They stand less dear to me than any flower that blows, but that is no reason why I should fail to do them justice.

Never, I believe, until this last month had I come to hold the Petunia at its proper value, and now I feel that an honourable amend is due, even perhaps something over-due, because of my comparative insensibility of past years. Until lately I had regarded it merely as one of the multitudinous harmless unnecessary bedding-out plants, and used it in consequence with indifference, not all unspiced with a faint flavour of superciliousness. But the case is altered now, and it is entirely the remote and careless goddess of the unforeseen who should be thanked. Chance and the gardener did buy for me

a few boxes of nameless undistinguished seedlings, of origin as dubious as that of those alluring basketfuls of blue-eyed beribboned kittens hawked about by dainty damsels at bazaars. And lo! the plot that failed and was thus fortuitously replenished has blossomed like the rose, or an old Coalport tea-service, with the prettiest imaginable confusion of pink and white and deeper pink and green. Some of the Liliputian trumpets are striped and freaked, others are what my vice-regent calls "selfs," but all are delicate and tenderly bright of tint, and the effect of the whole is inspiring in the extreme.

A whole lawn's length away from these, with an added severance of tall dark laurel hedge between, flare and fade my flaunting Escholzias and Marigolds, and farther on, near upon the borders of the shrubbery, grow high bushes of yet another *démodée* flower that I am glad to entertain for old sake's sake and the memories of childish days. How well one remembers the fancies that once would invest these dark green bowers of Fuchsia, as gracefully drooping as any languishing belle of Keepsake or Forget-me-not portrayal; and still the ancient kindness stays, and still I look with mild unreasoned pleasure upon the slim little pendant blossoms with their short purple petticoats and bright slashed crimson slips.

Over against the long semicircular marble seat that faces the fountain on the sunken lawn I have planned and helped towards fulfilment a plot of white flowers, solely white, to linger beside at twilight, when every luminous tone, and especially this, takes on a natural

magic, and seems to shine of its own proper virtue upon the darkening scene. And, indeed, it has succeeded beyond my expectation; even yet its ghostly serenity lights the pleasaunce as with a lamp of alabaster lighted by the moon. White Stocks, White Poppies, Mallows, Verbenas, Pelargoniums, Nicotianas—alas! it was too late for lilies—made up a broken but harmonious mass of varied whites that I must remember to repeat, and try to better for another year.

Surely Spring and Autumn are the English orchard's two great moments, and of the twain I could not honestly declare which shows the greater beauty—performance for once may even outshine promise. It was only in the famous orchard of Alcinous that you might fairly judge of both. The low, twisted trees above the emerald grass are hung with chrysoprased, ruby, russet, and coral, where apples still ungathered blush or glimmer palely-green; though the pears that hung one above the other heavy with sweetness, some coloured like honey and amber, some touched with the ruddy bronze of pine boles lit at sunset, are safely gathered in.

Those light-green ovals that light up the silver boughs and dark aromatic leafage of the great walnut-trees give little hint to the unwary gatherer of their distaining store; they look as innocent of gypsy craft as the green apples themselves. But I know better, and am not to be taken unawares,

“*Festina lente*” would seem to be the watchword of the frost as yet, for the out-door chrysanthemums begin their shy blossoming beside the high south wall unhindered. Soon the last pale roses will deck the bushes

with their scanty-sprinkled pearls, while the fiery nasturtium still riots amid its lusty profusion of flat green discs gemmed over with bright dew, and strong entwining tendrils. The scarlet and purple pimpernel, the Shepherd's Weatherglass, has not yet forgotten its task beneath the season's lessening light, but still lifts its friendly eye towards the autumn skies and me.

"The trees are Indian princes, but soon they'll turn to ghosts," and in the thought of this it is not entirely a sense of loss that predominates; we shall in all likelihood be weary enough of winter and its ensigns later on. But for the moment—and the moment is always all that should matter so far as the spirit of place is concerned and the sentiment of the season—there is content, exhilaration almost, in this subtle atmosphere of change. Evanescent, if you will, are the lovely sunset dyes on vine and tree, and trailing, glowing creeper, but what pleasure touched in any degree by magic was ever the less for that?



IN THE WILD GARDEN.



La flute amère d'Automne
Pleure dans le soir anxieux.

AUTUMN'S melancholy lute
Calls so clear and calls so sweet,
Through the forest brown and mute,
Down the white-walled village street.

"Follow now, Oh follow now,
Burns the leaf upon the bough;
Cross the mountains hoar and old,
To the land of sunset gold."

Autumn beckons as she goes,—
"Follow me, Oh follow me,
Would you 'scape the winter snows
And the Happy Valleys see."

Autumn's amber-coloured veil
Floats along the evening breeze,
Like a gilded galleon's sail
Beckoning on to splendid seas.

Autumn's lute sounds low and clear,—
Autumn's melancholy lute,
"Follow here, Oh follow here!"
Over woods and meadows mute.

"Come away, Oh come away!
Sundown calls you home from day;
Night is near and earth grows cold;
Follow through the sunset gold."



THE SUNSET OF OUR YEAR

GONE where the old moons go are all the strictly summer flowers; summer's lease is run out, and autumn takes possession of the garden. The lavender harvest has some while since been gathered in, and even the cry of the lavender pedlar, which, oddly enough, runs to the air of an ancient Breton hymn tune, is no longer heard about the streets. Larkspur and lupin, pinks, Mary lilies, and mignonette, together with many another fair and fragrant tenant of the prime, are already but memories—their candles are all out, and the flamboyant Torch lily rears its stately head above their graves. Autumn is come, indeed, open-handed as ever, and between her bewildering bounties of flower and fruit, the golden largesses of her lower sun, one is too much engaged by the present to consider over-curiously as to glories past.

The rose garden is gradually awakening, with robin for its troubador, singing perhaps as sweetly as that "old captive" who, or ever the knightly years were gone with the old world to the grave, sung of Aucassin and Nicolette. Yet, decoratively speaking, the chief honours of the hour belong mainly to orchard trees; for here you have before you, glowing in the yellow sun, groves and bowers that bring to mind Aladdin's legendary garden.

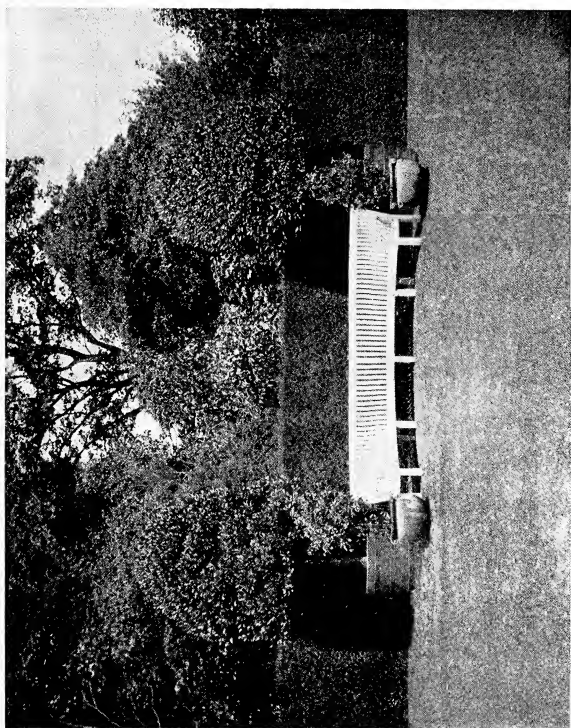
Legendary, one says; but what reality has ever impressed itself more vividly than that fabled pleasure? Be that as it may, the fruit garden very

sensibly reminds one of it now. To be sure, my trees boast no leaves and branches of silver or of gold; but it was precisely here, as I imagine, that the magician made his mistake so far as beauty was concerned.

Silver and gold have they none, these trees that bend beneath their rich load; but what better setting could you conceive for the heavy half-translucent globes of violet and rose and amber than their sheltering jade-green bowers? Especially grateful to the eye are the honey-coloured clusters of the oval harvest plum among their deep green leaves. Unconsidered by the virtuoso, by reason, perhaps, of their unfashionable dimensions and comparatively old-world origin, they still rejoice the heart of the amateur through sight and savour alike, to say nothing of the pleasant childhood's memories they evoke.

You close your eyes for a moment, and here surely is the clean, soft scent of the stackyard and the freshly-reaped fields under dim blue skies, where a vast copper moon is slowly mounting. It is from the tree overhanging the high red wall by the herb-bed that you plucked this smooth yellow fruit in your hand. Who shall maintain there are no dreams to sell, even now?

Nut brown and rosy bronze pears droop heavily from the bough, and red and golden apples toss in the light breeze that stirs the tree tops; while every now and again "thump" in soft grass or broad border falls one that the execrable worm i' th' bud condemned long since in bloom time. 'Tis an ill wind indeed that blows nobody good, and the birds will not be slow to profit by our losses.



GARDEN-SEAT AND SWEET PEAS.
(From a photo by Lady Harmsworth.)

Never have the flower-beds and borders looked gayer than now—I had almost said gaudier, but the term is too full-flavoured. The riotous nasturtiums burn with hard, gem-like flames along their lusty trails of round fresh leaves, some clambering higher and higher, and others content to grow into veritable bushes, elbowing their neighbours with a will.

Orange and lemon-hued marigolds stoutly hold their own, stiff as grenadiers; the golden sun-flower and its pensive sister, the moon-flower, with its delicate disc, whose colour hovers between silver and primrose, grow in beauty side by side, towering above their neighbours as their faces follow the sun. *Lux tua via mea.* What fairer device could there be for flower or mortal?

Even in the act of fading they keep a certain, although a different charm; the radiant petals wither and disappear, but a firm green halo encircles the closely serried disc of shining seeds coloured like empurpled ebony.

I woke at early dawn “one misty, moisty morning” a little while ago with a most strange illusion of spring that haunted the way from sleep to wakening. “Yes, it is; yes, it is,” piped the shrill silvery voices over and over in elfin gaiety. And it was; for, looking out, I could faintly discern the tits clad in their dim and delicate blues and greens and jaunty black velvet caps pouncing and swinging hither and thither upon the dark bosses of the ripened seeds, with the self-same airy gossip and tinkling laughter with which in spring they had swung and pounced amid the apple blossom.

It was as though the ghost of spring had flitted through the garden.

Very beautiful are the late lilies that fill the carved stone urns along the terrace with sweetness and light, their white frosted petals all set about, as it were, and gemmed with rubies; but the present pride of my heart, that will all too soon be over and gone, is my prodigious bed of phloxes.

Never can I be too glad that that heroic sacrifice of open space was made between the desert and the sown, the kitchen garden and the wilderness. And the oblation of a grass plot upon so lovely a shrine was not so very considerable, after all, for in the earlier year all manner of narcissi and daffodils blow there; while now it is a field of flowing, tossing colour, such a sea of glory as is almost too beautiful for belief.

The tall, clustering blossom-heads lean this way and that as the breeze sways them, bringing to light each moment some fresh harmony of colour. Rose-red and snow-white, cherry, coral, and vermillion, royal purple, faint lavender, tender puce and deep violet, pale rose, ruby-eyed, pearl with violet eye—they are too many to tell of. Even magenta softens its asperities and takes on new comeliness cast in this radiant kaleidoscope. Decidedly, this plot was well worth the making.

The autumn is not yet old, but there are signs in plenty to show that it is already well upon its way. And of these the most infallible and clamant is the robin's song. You would think him rejoicing because summer is over to hear him pay such sedulous court to the new season.

A while since he sang the new moon in—a pale and slender sickle veiled with mist, a hand's cast, as it were, beyond the crooked apple-bough—with so fine a fervour that almost he persuaded me to his opinion.

YOU may remember how the skies were dim,
And all the air was full of floating shadows,
Tall pine-trees stood upon the broad hills' rim,
And deep woods loomed beyond the water-meadows.

It was your birthday—I, from overseas,
Had come by many a vagrant path and byway,
To rest awhile beneath your ancient trees,
Before I sought once more the swallows' highway.

Still I remember—nor will you forget
How, when beclouded in the windless weather,
The silver phantom of the sun had set,
Along the fields we walked and talked together.

And all our talk went to the same good tune
Of rare days done, of those to come thereafter,
While up the hill-side, through the night's still noon,
We wandered with the white October moon,
And listened to the owls' delightful laughter.

SUNDOWN

“THE autumn skies are flushed with gold,” for it is October, when the fall of the year is at its brightest, and most beautiful. There is no denying that the breath of decay comes over the fading meadows and blows down the lanes and roads; it blows, indeed, like love in the old boat-song of the Nile, it “blows into the heart.” Yet to one in the right spirit and of sane emotions October may very well appear to be the most enjoyable of all the months, past or to come. The air has an even temper; it gently stimulates; gone are the ardour and uncomfortable oppression of the midsummer sun, and not yet are the bitter chill and mist of November or the empty silence of the long winter. We stand, as it were, in the fine phrase of Stevenson, “upon a little rising ground in this desperate descent,” and have permission for a space to revel in our St. Martin’s summer. From the back of tradition we have been accustomed to look for good weather in this month. When Hood wrote of the skies as flushed with gold it may be that he was in London, for he was a thorough Londoner. Gold, in truth, characterises October in London far more than that same month in the country.

“For earth and sky and air
Are golden everywhere,
And golden with a gold so suave and fine
That looking on it lifts the heart like wine.”

In the country the change comes slowly, is only coming even now, with russets and ambers and the

glories of rich sun-dyed browns and delicate yellows. But in town the change is almost over; flowers have withered under frosts, and leaves lie gold and red and dun upon the paths. Yet—the deep glory of the London sun is never realised in that clearer and purer air upon the open fields and hills.

October marks the turn of the gardener's year. Beds are being daily tidied, flowers which have bloomed and faded are being cut down, the broom is for ever plying on the walks, and all signs witness to the close of the horticultural year. All signs witness also to the opening of a new year. The season is dead; long live the season! There is no rest for the conscientious gardener, as there is proverbially none for the wicked. "The flowers are in their grassy tombs, and tears of dew are on them all"; but no sooner are they packed away in death than the gardener faces another year with hope and faith, and in mental vision beholds the bright prophecy—sometimes, alas, but the mirage—of a spring and a summer to come. Some, to be sure, of a sentiment too little robust, close down their interest in the open garden with this month. Thenceforward their thoughts turn inwards to the hothouse or the stove, where all the delights of exotic manufactures may be perpetually theirs. Yet this, I think, is a mistake, and one should encourage a heartiness of sympathy which will enable one to tread the accustomed paths between the haunts of vanished favourites, or walk by vacant copses without regret, but rather in the company of gracious memories.

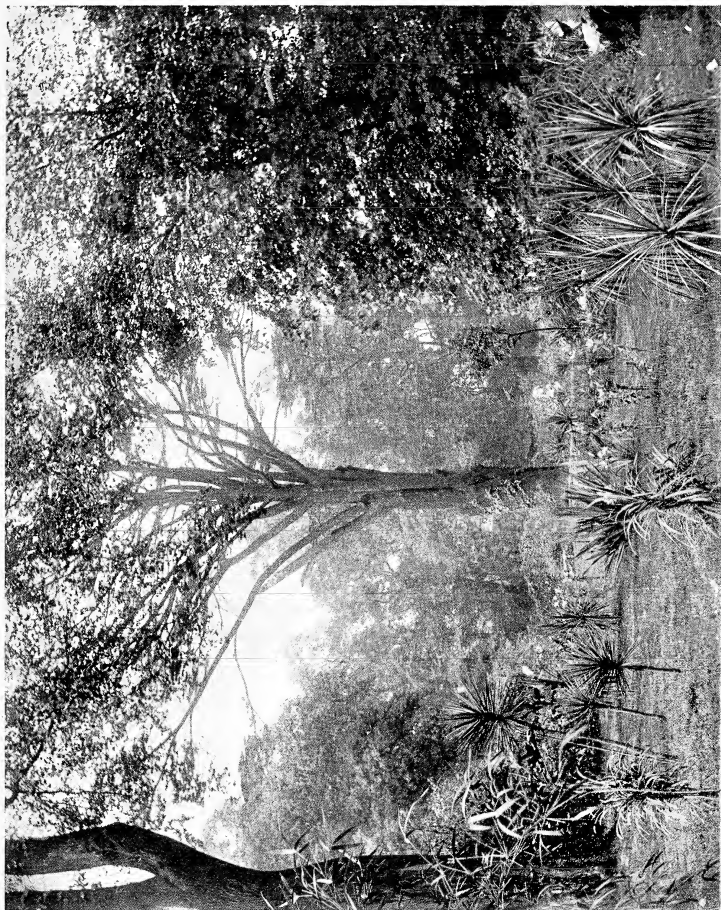
There is little in the garden in October that has not already flowered and spread abroad its beauty either in

August or September. A few of the reluctant early chrysanthemums will endure much in patience, but a combination of frost and rain and weeping dew is too severe a discipline for the hardiest flower. Thus is it desirable, I find, if you would be sure of your early chrysanthemums, to deal by them as you deal by your later and more magnificent blossoms: have them safely ensconced in pots, that is, against the shrewd frosts, and rush them into shelter on the first warning. You will then secure a continuous succession of these flowers from July or August until the snows of Christmas and even the dark days of the New Year. And in their innumerable colours and shapes and sizes there can never be dull satiety. Yet now is the season rather of continuations than of fresh surprises in the garden, of sequels rather than of fresh inception. Things go gently forward; there is a perceptible advance—towards the grave; the year, as it were, rustles towards its end. The beds are still bright and full in places. The blue plumbago still decorates the borders, with the unfailing nasturtium. *Salvia*, too, shines refulgent in her spikes of red and blue—the bluest blue that ever was on land or sea. Now is the season, too, of rejuvenescence on the part of some flowers which have slept awhile and awakened to suppose it spring. Second crops and second growths are invariable at this season. Strawberries bloom once again, and have even fruited in some instances; the sturdy lupin still puts forth his lances of blue and white; while the delphinium, cut down long since, bourgeons again and throws up delicate spires of varying colours. Ripe

October's faded marigolds belie the poet this year, for they are still flowering; and the calliopsis, so constant and so kind, pies the borders with its gipsy gems. In the warm and sheltered nooks of the garden the primrose opens her eye. I have known her to blossom from October onwards until the full noon of April—not, of course, with generous and free-handed offerings, but rather as the gorse flowers, as a reminder, as a promise; for love and the furze die not, and the primrose is fain of life.

Nature in her courses is for ever achieving fresh beauties and new permutations of loveliness. As I passed this morning through my kitchen garden the mist had but newly risen, the sky was palely and dimly blue under a shimmering curtain, and the tears of dew were upon the asparagus. The clustering red berries gleamed in the faint sunlight, and the tall, feathery bushes, six feet at least in height, were one great sheet of glimmering pearly glory, so delicate, so shy of look, and so magical in aspect as to seem derived of faëry, and certainly in no wise calculated to remind one of hearty happy dinners long since gone, when spring was still young and asparagus was "cheap to-day."

The beauty of the hops, too, is not yet over. The green has turned to brown, but the long loops and festoons look just as beautiful as ever, trailing up my verandah, and netting tree to tree after a manner that shames me before any practical and orderly gardener. But the garden is for enjoyment, rightly understood, and not for profit alone, or for the use and wont of definite and iron conventions. My hops shall grow and overspread what I please.



ON THE EDGE OF THE WILDERNESS.

I find that a flower which I once contemned as purposeless, grown in a suitable way, can be very pleasing. I refer to the so-called autumn crocus, which, of course, is no crocus at all, but a colchicum. The name which I prefer is meadow saffron, so suggestive of spring and the sweets of the year. There are autumn crocuses, to be sure, but what is usually known as such is this pretty meadow saffron. It may be either purple or white, is leafless, and rises like a ghost from the dark earth—a ghost of March and its dead crocuses. Planted very thickly and over fairly large spaces, it has a handsome effect, salutes the eye at a distance, and tones wonderfully with the dull purple-brown soil and the fading green. And there is so little now in the dwindling hospitality of the garden to greet us that one must be grateful to such a graceful flower that has braved the melancholy of this declining season.

Now is the hour when every gardener is apt to tell the tale of his flowers, and some are found so shameless and so arrogant, so fussy and so important, as to write off to their favourite papers stating the number and quality of their blossoms. Dahlias, save in high and dry places, begin to show drab and dingy on their stalks; and here in my garden they are no longer. Nightly the smoke of the refuse fires ascends to heaven, and the bitter-sweet aroma of consuming stalk and leaf mingles with the smell of the damp earth. Auriculas are blooming afresh in the borders; but what of that? The roses are dead, or all but dead, and the ashes of a thousand fragrant flowers are scattered to the winds. The Japanese anemones blow gallantly, white rose and red;

the gaillardias linger, bright and self-assertive; the montbretias deck the front ranks of the beds; the gandavensis hybrids of the gladiolus struggle still from their spathes and shoulder boldly to the light; and along the orchard fences rises the mist of Michaelmas daisies, dancing in the growing winds of autumn—fire-flies in a tangled skein. Yet these flower and fade with a consciousness, a premonition of death. Only the hard flower of the ivy, pale and spare and prim, seems proper to this tide of decay and fall.

Yet to one rightly constituted, as I have said, the garden even now has much delight to offer. Berries are red on the trees, holly and hip and haw, the sweet-briar and the eglantine. Such a wealth of berries, as of acorns on the oaks, would seem to promise a severe winter, or at least a white Christmas. "If St. Michael," runs the old saw, "brings many acorns, Christmas will cover the fields with snow." St. Michael's Day has come and gone, a splendid festival of warmth and colour, but St. Michael's threat remains. These last few weeks have witnessed the harvest of my apples and pears. The long narrow shelves of the fruit-loft are full of beaming, ruddy apples and pears of many colours, from the bronze Calabash to the lemon-green Marie Louise. The trees, alas! are despoiled of all their beauty; the fruit that shone dully in the sun is gone, and now the leaves also are falling; but abroad in the fruit-chamber is a delicious fragrance, fit for the senses of the gods, a bouquet of incommunicable odours. I have also caused my walnut-trees to be beaten, and they have yielded meekly but shyly to the rod. The sward

below is bestrewn with the scattered shards and husks of the green and ebon envelopes, but the nuts are stored in safety, and I have buried some in a shallow pit against Christmas, the Yule fire, and the old Madeira. For some years I have tried this experiment, and have usually found that a fair proportion of the nuts are kept fresh and moist and sweet; their ivory, wing-like kernels parting easily from the amber-coloured leathern glove. Certain it is that the nut dried and stored is apt to shrivel or decay far sooner than that which is left in the keeping of the earth—to the treatment, so to speak, of Nature. I cannot find it in my heart to “cut down” too ruthlessly or too early. The bracken still sprawls in my wilderness, turning to russet and dim gold; while even the scarlet-runners in the kitchen garden are still running, though not so freely as of old, and the red flowers top the tall sticks on which they have been supported throughout the summer. Faithful indeed is the scarlet-runner for use and beauty, faithful unto death.

Yet my vision roams not only backward at this hour of parting ways—the prudent gardener must begin in October to renew his hopes and plans, to prepare and order for another year. This is a work which stirs in me both fears and hopes. There are so many ideas one would like to adventure, and yet one dare not be too rash, for a summer lost is a summer lost for ever. It is, of a truth, a long course betwixt now and the open-blushing, shy and tremulous spring. To us in these islands it must seem sometimes as though the dread winter would never end. Grey and white are his

colours, gloom and vacancy the insignia of his reign, and he sits in his impregnable towers with the air of one who has taken permanent possession. He is the man in possession for five long weary months so far as the outer garden is concerned. Our garden is enclosed indeed, but enclosed only from the eyes of visiting strangers and the rigorous winds of the Orient. It lies exposed to winter, from which no man nor any power has yet been able to deliver us. The hurricane that swept through garden and wilderness about a week since, wrenching boughs from their hold and filling the weeping air with drenched green leaves and twigs like forlorn flights of storm-tossed birds, has left behind it but little perceptible trace, for all its sound and fury. The walks are clean once more, and although the skies glitter more clearly through the thinning leafage of the trees, there is but little wreckage now to show the track of the storm. During the next three months the rain will beat, and the winds will sift, and the frosts will cleanse and purify; but my garden, threshed by these turbulent forces of Nature, will grow sweet and wonderful towards the breaking of the spring—as it were, dawn in the year. But now I must prepare, for, though the fallow months seem long and dreary, the hour will soon be gone when we may take thought for the future and the resurrection of the garden.

I have taken some steps towards a reorganisation of my garden. I find this to be necessary every autumn, for, however greatly the plan of the dead season may have pleased me, there is no year goes past but brings its bitter experience and its fuller knowledge. This

coming year I am shifting to the eastern boundary of my orchard a phalanx of young sycamores to break the power of the winds. Sycamores seed freely, are easily founded in the earth, and grow faster than almost any tree I know. To which add that they are mightily handsome in shape and leaf, and you will have all the advantages of the sycamore before you. Remember, however, that it is greedy, avid of room, and elbows aside more modest neighbours. Nevertheless I like the sycamore as I like few trees. It is not a pig, like the elder, and it repays hospitality with generous gratitude, just as, on the other hand, in London at least, the chestnut begrudges and denies us. Her leaves fall, in the town, in midsummer, and by the end of September the birds may flit through bare sticks. I am changing, also, the scheme of some lawn-beds. These have been until now given over to early tulips, and so have had to be restocked in June with late annuals or the usual "bedding-out" plants. But I have boldly plunged into a resolution, which is to plant with roses and underplant with narcissus, Trumpet and Star, and the incomparable Orange and Sulphur Phœnix. I have great faith in underplanting, for the blooms are gone and the bulbs ripened or ever the rose-bushes fill with leaf. A few plots I have reserved for a different destiny. They are to be planted heavily with early tulips in white and yellow mixtures, and white and nankeen or buff; and for successors I shall interplant Spanish and English iris in variety, followed by the early gladioli, and closing the season with the *gandavensis* hybrids. It is venturesome, but not, I think, too bold. At any

rate, I am going to try it. This month I sow sweet-peas, and trust to fortune that the winter bite not too keenly. The autumn-sown peas come earlier into flower and bloom more freely, speeding the parting tulips at the back of May. No flower is sweeter than the sweet sweet-pea, and I grow innumerable varieties in rows, in groups, and in phalanxes wherever the sun shines upon an idle spot in my garden.

Fashions in flowers come and go, like fashions in dress and games and books, and as a rule one is wise to pay little heed to these flitting fancies: yet the practice of naturalising flowers in grass, introduced a good many years since, has justified itself, and has taken its rightful place among the regular operations of the garden. I conduct this part of my work upon a scale not over-liberal.

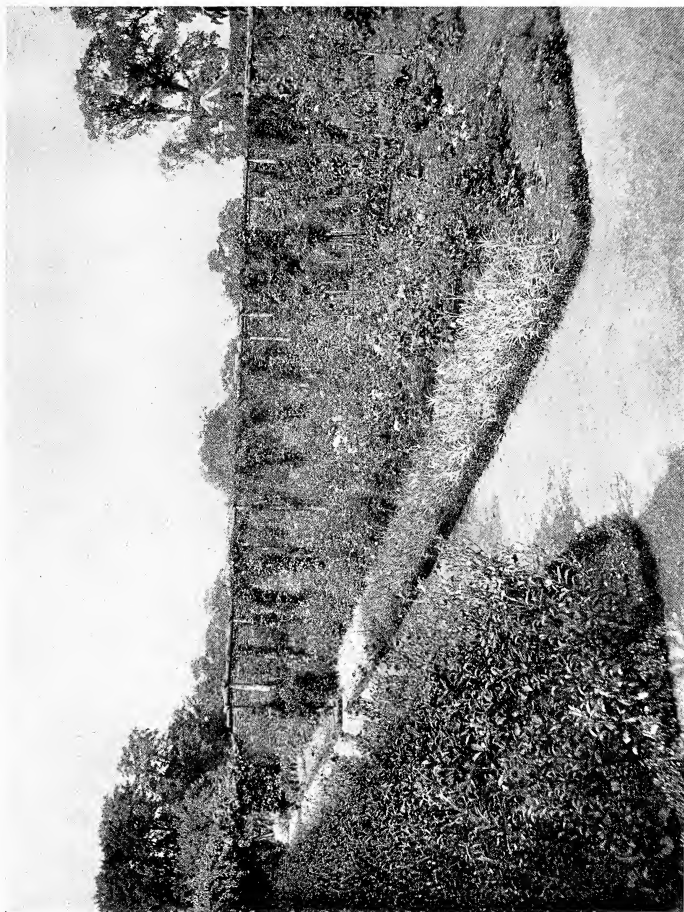
The wild garden in all its glory of wildness is for those with ample spaces, wide meadows bordering upon the park, and, maybe, a wandering, gurgling stream. What cannot be accomplished with such materials? Yet even those whose ambition is more or less confined within the shelter of their walled garden and its sequestered lawns can do much to decorate their narrower demesne. I plant some thousands of crocuses—white, lilac-striped, purple, and yellow—in the lawn before my windows. It is best to take up the turf bodily, and, having prepared the soil, put in the bulbs, and then re-cover and roll. The process will improve the turf, if anything, and will offer a wonderful field of flower in earliest spring. If massed, I find that the scoundrelly sparrows shrink somewhat from interfering

with the crocuses; and, in any case, these are more easily protected than where they are sparsely set. Those, however, who are unwilling to make a few sacrifices in order to reap the benefits of February and March, and scruple to abolish the roller from Christmas-time onwards, were best left to the enjoyment of their immaculate and barren lawns. I, for my part, have room and to spare in my affections for beauty in any guise, and can rejoice in the smooth-shaven sward as well as in a space of lawn fecund and prodigal of stranger blooms.

The low sun makes the colour. We are past the season of equinoctials, and the winds have done their worst in the orchard—the fruit is safe in the loft, and the year is left to die by itself. Yet at times there rises in one a wonder, a hope, half a faith, that here is spring again—the phantom truly of false morning. The slow and gradual decline of this year, with its soft melancholy, has aided the deception. I hear the piping of the robin across the emptying garden—the trees begin to show thin and ragged, and I see the bare boughs breaking out into view once more. But this morning I heard the tit also, singing as though May were back again and the long silences of the summer had never been. The sap is sinking in the trees, one knows too well; but the birds have been deceived, like the flowers, and in the audience of their song it is possible to dream that it is spring. Almost I thought I heard the blackbird; but, alas, he is still silent. None so generous as the thrush, who is often wont to trill in December, and is never later than February;

the blackbird will not break silence until March; he appears with the crocuses. The low sun makes the colour; and to-day the colour is gold and red and tawny yellow. The shadows are out on the lawns, very faint, very long, very quiet, and misty:

“Golden, all golden. In a golden glory,
Long lapsing down a golden-coasted sky,
The day not dies but seems
Dispersed in wafts and drifts of gold, and shed
Upon a past of golden song and story
And memories of gold and golden dreams.”



HIGH-WALLED GARDENS GREEN AND OLD.



VESTURED and veiled with twilight,
Lulled in the winter's ease,
Dim, and happy, and silent,
My garden dreams by its trees.

Urn of the sprayless fountain,
Glimmering nymph and faun,
Gleam through the dark-plumed cedar,
Fade on the dusky lawn.

Here is no stir of summer,
Here is no pulse of spring ;
Never a bud to bourgeon,
Never a bird to sing.

Dreams—and the kingdom of quiet !
Only the dead leaves lie
Over the fallen roses
Under the shrouded sky.

Folded and fenced with silence,
Mindless of moil and mart,
It is twilight here in my garden,
And twilight here in my heart.



THE WANING YEAR

THE year's in the wane; the trees are nearly leafless now, and the few sparkling hours of the sun's bounty shine with much the same enchantment as a midsummer sunrise. The rich, low rays, the shallow shadows, the full fresh colour of the green lawns in such places where the dew-pearled and diamonded grass has lost its misty jewelled glamour beneath breeze and sun—all this brings strangely to mind the sentiment of early morning hours in summer months that begin already to seem long ago and far away. But this is high noon, and it is through bare boughs the glory falls; only the glistening evergreens give back its lustre from their polished facets. The bright sun hangs low, but it will rise no higher to-day, nor for many and many a day to come. Indeed, it is an arc of gentler eminence that he must traverse now from day to day, until the season's tide shall be fallen to its lowest and it is time to turn again. All too often, of late, even these few silvery-golden hours have been denied us, while the dull red spectre of the sun has swum sullen through misty skies, and hoar frost hung thick on every tree. If the weather-lorists and their ancient records are to be believed, it is a hard winter that we have before us, and we shall do well to prepare and protect as scrupulously as we may. St. Michael came with great gifts of acorns in his hands; many of late October's leaves clung withered to the boughs, refusing desperately to the last their proper fate; the lingering flowers' unseasonable sojourn in the borders was in itself a portent of no small significance.

Above all, that ominous old saying, "for every fog in October a snow in the winter," comes to mind with a ring of menace, for this last October's tale of fogs was large; a reckoning more liberal than pleasing to be chalked up against us on the wall of the year's hostel and paid for in winter's cold, white money. One is even inclined to feel a little ill-used in advance at the thought of the fog-ogre's jaunts at our expense, if indeed we must presently pay for a debt we never did contract. No, if the winter pilgrimage is to be more than usual long and cheerless, I, for my part, would be paying my shot, so to speak, with far better grace were the score run up for an extravagance of sunny days. That I would never begrudge—but to think that the abhorred *bête noire* of autumn has disported himself to our cost is more than a sober-minded gardener should be asked to bear. However, in all likelihood the prophets may be wrong; the most respectable auguries have proved fallible ere now. It is quite possible that the coming season may roar as gently as a sucking dove and show itself a marvel of moderation, in spite of all our forebodings; and, if not—why, the shrewd discipline may well serve to bricken us up; our fortifications are complete, and, anyway, I have for reassurement a long-remembered adage of the very first gardener of my acquaintance—"snow fattens the land." So that all is to be well, whatever may betide, for thinking shall make it so, whether the year's last wear is white or green, whether the snowdrop and the winter aconite are to have pearl or emerald for setting. As I go from one parterre to another, casting complacent glances from border to border, from plot to plot,

my heart leaps up with something, I imagine, of the miser's sense of power, of hoarded happiness. "Felicity, inquire within" might serve for sign-board to these symmetrical brown barrows that entomb the secret gold of spring—the jewelled spheres, the ivory palaces that are to rise as from the dead at the enchanted hour, the magic word. My heart goes out in glad anticipation to that charmed moment when the spring wind shall sigh its fragrant "Open Sesame!"

Here, at least, I know that I do not reckon without my host; for whatever the blunders, the incertitudes, the deceits, that may wait upon the practice of the gardener's art at large, I know that my bulbs will never play me false. This argosy will bring home its galleons faithfully, whatever enemies may be abroad. As the plump russet or dun globes sank down to burial one by one, committed to the kind earth's care, and the dark soil was made once more smooth above them, it seemed to me as though I had staked out a sure claim in some exquisite new country, or secured the title-deeds of a castle in Eldorado. So much for the far future; but meanwhile the immediate present, the world of to-day and to-morrow, is by no means bare of interest. Up in the fruit gallery there are some shelves emptied already, and some thinning fast; while others still hoard their pleasant store, ruddy and russet, amber, orange-tawny and dark jade, against the still colder and more barren months to come. Of the many tiers of pears there are but comparatively few left; but these cloistral shades are still perfumed with the incense of sweet memories. Gone are the scented Urbanistes, the Flemish Beauty, the

honey-flavoured, nut-brown Beurre Busc, that anonymous but none the less delightful foundling known as "Thompson's"; the great green Beurre d'Anjou, my own especial favourite by reason of its subtly mingled delicacy and distinction of bouquet—but the tale is too long to be told here of all these kindly fruits of the earth that have come and gone.

This only let me say: that two of the most highly esteemed pears of the earlier season are to my mind not altogether deserving of the tribute they receive in the form of praise from the connoisseur and price from the fruiterer. After grave and mature deliberation I am determined forthwith to expose both the celebrated Marie Louise and the little less famous Pitmaston Duchess as being upon occasion merely handsome high-bred shrews, fair to the eye but rough and acid to the palate. They are as notable arch-humbugs, the pair of them, after their fashion, as is the Gloire de Dijon among roses. They excel in size, it is true; but so does the fat lady of the country fair. I have known the Duchess, indeed, to turn the scale at two and a half pounds; while, again, the delicate primrose and ambers of their complexions conspire with a fine regularity of contour to impress the world at large with a sense of their imposing beauty. But all that glitters is not gold, and for all their fine looks these noble dames of peardom can be sometimes sour at heart—*Strass-Engel*, *Haus-Teufel* is their motto, and the best of their mission is fulfilled when they recline between pointed green leaves and purple clusters of the grape within the ancient silver and crystal temple of the Sheffield *épergne*. You must take them at the very

psychological instant, or not at all. However, these are gone by with their glories, and we have still, to fall back upon, closely serried rows of the Glou Morceau that we left hanging on the bough until the first frost and predatory birds gave warning. These will see the year out with us, and enliven our Yule-tide mahogany tree; their stout and comely contemporary, the Uvedale St. Germain, most solid and greenest of good cooking-pears, is to provide us, so long as our ample store shall last, with the choicest and most delicate of preserves and confections.

There are others beside, but these I believe to be the best; while, in spite of pessimistic prophecies as to the apple yield, I find my dessert shelves not ill-provided, after all. My cooking varieties are somewhat to seek, with the exception of the waxen pink and white Hawthornden, so like the Emperor Alexander; and the great green Alfriston; to say nothing of my faithful Rymers and Cellinis. But the fine flower of all dessert apples, Cox's Orange Pippin, with its sober bronzed rind and heart of crisp gold and crystal, has been boutiful to me this season; and of the scarce less delectable old Ribstone Pippin, the excellent Claygate Pearmain, and the useful Braddick's Nonpareil, I have no reason for complaint. But the radiant rose and golden King of the Pippins has played me false for once. As the heavy wooden door closes, a strange belated waft of summer comes to trouble the chill air with memories of jasmine, of syringa. No—nor is it of magnolia quite that this faint fragrance is eloquent; one must needs go back and see. Here from this shallow tray of pear-shaped yellow fruit floats the

ambrosial breath; and how could I have forgotten, even for a moment, the heavenly odour of the quince?

There are times when I am moved to consider no flower so lovely and so temperate as the chrysanthemum. Its infinite variety of form, and size, and colour; its wonderful longevity as a cut blossom, which yet is marred by no stiff, immortelle-like lifelessness; its fresh, cool perfume like the scent of freshly turned furrows or breath of autumn woods, these are perhaps its chiefest charms, although one has this also to remember—that the chrysanthemum is as an oasis upon the sterile steppes of winter. It is, so to speak, apart from its proper excellences, the friend in need who brings a most opportune and harmonious element of movement and loveliness into a season of sterility and decay. Faith and Hope are sealed up implicit in brown border and bed; but this flower that blossoms like the rose within the very precincts of the sepulchre, beneath Puritan skies that belie all thoughts of mirth and radiance, is surely the embodiment itself of Charity. It carries with it, too, so sweet a materialisation of the hour's best sentiments; the languorous exotic would but touch the spring of inopportune reminiscence or untimely prescience; but this flower with its robust delicacy, its savour of the clean bare earth, brings with it a sense of fitness and happy cheer for which the twelve months' quiet labour, *ohne Hast und ohne Rast*, seems not too high a price to pay.

The chrysanthemum-lover's year begins and ends in December, the harvest of the last late blooms and the task of striking the new cuttings being practically coëval; and thence onwards each successive month will bring its

appointed *petits soins*, not one of which may be omitted with impunity if you really set store upon the ultimate reward. By the which reward I am, however, far from meaning the success of the pot-hunter who would hustle all his choicest blossoms into one crowded week of inglorious life, the life of the "exhibit." My flowers are flowers, not merely potential exhibits to be mechanically hurried or retarded to swell my vanity at the shows. The rightful province of the professional grower is so much to be respected that I would never even so much as set foot therein. It is enough for me to profit by the results of his collation in enriching my own stock from his when occasion arises; but to stretch my plants upon that Procrustean scheme which is, perhaps of necessity, his, that will I not. His varied arts of "stopping," "pinching," "rubbing off," "letting break," and so forth are invaluable—or I had better said indispensable—but I like to use them at my own discretion, and so, as it were, to eat my cake and have it too, securing for myself a deliberate succession of the delightful flower, instead of such a brief plethora of beauty as makes for an indigestion of the colour-sense, much after the same fashion as "gallery headache" or a visual surfeit of pyrotechnics. For me the chrysanthemum is far too majestic and leisurely a flower to be herded willy-nilly into show-space. Its varieties have overmuch individuality to look their best in a crowd.

But above and beyond this reason for husbanding one's resources is the far greater pleasure that one finds in a slow and stately pageant of rare colours and fine forms than, say, in a transformation scene. And so, by making the

extremely useful rules of the game subservient to your good pleasure, in place of playing it according to the law and the prophets, you will secure a far fairer display in your glass-houses, extending also over a longer period, than the pedantic grower. Only do you make a proper study of disbudding—and, believe me, the whole practice is of so limpid a simplicity as to jump to the eyes, once the general principle is grasped—and you shall marshal your flowery hosts here and there about the season's field to your heart's content. Your gardener may not feel altogether pleased with you, but he will come to look over it in time, even perhaps to smile indulgently upon your more conspicuous failures. Yet there is no need to indulge largely in failures, if you are careful to study the individual characters and the habits of your chrysanthemums, and to bring them up accordingly. Among other things, too, one should especially remember that the mill will never grind with the waters that are past; by which I would signify that should a dry summer ever chance to find napping the Man who bears the Water-cans, the lapse were practically irrecoverable.

This year I think my glass-houses are particularly radiant. Against the pale apple-green background of the walls the soft flower-heads rise tier upon tier, like a bevy of enchanted princesses wrapped in stately robes of dark green scalloped velvet. Nothing very strikingly new or strange is here, for last December found me in no adventurous mood, but I am well pleased all the same. They stand as I like to see them—some grown upon the decorative system, but the larger majority after the specimen plan more or less; some more and some less.



A BRIDGE IN THE PLEASURE.

And greatly as I prize the light and elegant effect of the branching sprays and starry blossom-clusters of the decoratively grown, I could not love them near so much but for the aerial setting they offer to my most gorgeous specimen flowers. Save with the exclusively decorative species, it is all a matter of timely deletion; so I have arranged to have grandiose "specimens" of all my favourites, together with examples grown on a slightly less exclusive scheme beside. I could never weary of the perfections of some of these. Custom cannot stale the delicate lilac-rose beauty of Vivian Morel, nor the luxuriant charm of Madame Carnot's wealth of rose or ivory locks; while, apart from their proper excellences, these are two of the most valuable stocks extant: as, for instance, the beautiful Lady Hanham, Charles Davis—whose flakes of apricot and tawny gold would make sunshine in a shady place—and Mrs. J. Kitson, all are sports from Vivian Morel; and other scarce less celebrated beauties, among which we may number Madame Louis Boussillon, claim descent as sports or seedlings from Madame Carnot. Of a different and more massive type is the splendid Pride of Madford, whose large curving amaranthine petals disclose, as it were, scimitars of pale silver as their reverse; close beside it stands President Borel, of another distinguished parent-stock, with petals like deep-glowing garnets set about with dull gold.

It seems to me that the lady who stood sponsor for Eva Knowles must have realised the position of the best kind of fairy-godmother, so enchantingly is this fine flower equipped. The conscientious compiler of catalogues has more of my sympathy than ever, when I

behold its full glories ; for though you were to ransack the ages, spoil the climes, in search of jewelled words that should do justice to a flower that may be more fitly likened to the dusky reds and clear topaz of late autumn sunsets, even thus you might succeed as ill as I.

There is not, perhaps, so very much significance in a name, and it is true that none of our roses smell less sweetly, nor any of our chrysanthemums shine with lesser lustre for their usually prosaic titles.

And yet it is with a sensible thrill of gratitude, of recognition, that, once in a way, one happens upon the *not juste* bestowed upon a flower. What an indefinable charm, for example, is evoked by such a title as *Soleil de Décembre* ! If ever fortune should so favour my unassuming roof as to dower me with a white sport, I am going to call it Evelyn Hope. My mind is fixed upon that point, and now we only have to wait for the happy chance.

There is a certain division of opinion here concerning a chrysanthemum for which I entertain a genuine regard ; it is of the Japanese anemone variety, and goes by the name of Owen's Perfection. Marvellous to tell, my liking for this somewhat austere bloom, with its delicate greenish centre and wide white halo, is shared by—the gardener, of all people ! And I am so touched by this rare sympathy as almost to melt into praise of his most cherished specimen, a very large, immaculately formed flower, which recalls to me the colours of rep curtains and the contour of a circular sofa-cushion. *La Triomphante* is bearing her blushing honours particularly thick upon her this year, for the which I am grateful, as the

soft pearly-pink blots sprinkled here and there throughout the stronger-hued ranks help much towards harmony in the general effect. For sheer robustness and purity of colour I have nothing that I like better than the rich Pompeian red, reflexed with amber, of W. Holmes and the deeper dyes of John Shrimpton. The rich gold spray of the *Source d'Or*, one of the finest purely decorative kinds, flecks the great bank of bloom with added splendour, and everywhere I see shining stars of the *Souvenir d'une Petite Amie*, their silver whiteness showing all the fairer for the central tinge of snowdrop-green. And then—— But enumeration, even of the humblest, is hopeless. "I will show you how the lilies grow on the banks of Italy," if you will, but a house full of chrysanthemums in full bloom demands a nimbler pen than mine.

The twilight is very clear and grey this evening, and the few remaining leaves clap together in the light breeze with a strange illusion of pattering April rain, or the dry rustle of a driven flock. Forth of the chrysanthemum houses, their warm dazzle of light and colour takes on almost the semblance of a dream—a dream of Haroun Alraschid and his city. But here at my feet, as I go hearthwards down the long lawns, lie the quiet dun beds full of their hidden treasure. The dry leaves swirl lightly across them, and go eddying faintly away to unseen resting-places in the shade, like flights of phantom swallows.

"Here is the ghost of a summer that lived for us,
Here is a promise of summers to be."

THE starlings pipe and whisper in the trees,
Now loud, now low, for Autumn's lease is run;
The skies are stiller than still summer seas,
As sinks in shining and translucent ease
The late November sun.

November sunset—and a phantom moon
That floats, a shell-pale sickle, in the blue;
The light that comes—the light that goes so soon,
Both with the season's silence seem in tune,
With my heart's silence too.

This misty hour, whose garrulous birds will cease
Their fitful gossip as the west grows pale,
Breathes it not more of solace and release
Than sunsets golden as the Golden Fleece
Or song of nightingale?

THE WINTRY GARDEN

“Late lies the wintry sun a-bed,
A frosty, fiery, sleepy-head;
Blinks but an hour or two; and then,
A blood-red orange, sets again.”

THUS “R. L. S.,” in one of the very pleasantest of all his child’s garden songs; but it is precisely that hour or two of gracious golden blinking that makes our daylight happiness just now. We have hardly had time to grow weary of the long evenings as yet, and the charm of the few short hours of sunlight is beyond expression.

You are so grateful to him for showing his face at all in this the barren winter solstice, that perhaps it is only your gladdened fancy that would seem to read a new benignity, a greater splendour, into his smile. And when the “blood-red orange” goes down the clear sky, now sinking from flake to flake of the dark cedar, now caught and tangled in a thin maze of naked cherry boughs, through which he slips like a gold ducat through a net, I hold the pageant of his progress, for all its brevity, to the full as arresting in its beauty and its glamour as any sunset of summer time.

Then when he is gone, “when he nothing shines upon,” for a little space the low west is lighted with a murky fire, the Alpine rose of winter twilight, until blue mists, that curl and float like the smoke from autumn couch-fires, spread about the garden, obliterating all under the darkened skies. The days are short,

there is no denying; but, even so, and at this most desert moment of the year's round, where there is light, however brief, there is life; and I can never feel that my garden is dead to me, nor wholly sunk in deathly slumbers, while the sun shines there.

I am rejoiced that there is no real holiday in the gardener's year, for such a term must, perforce, spell estrangement. When the frost's hard seal is set so that one cannot dig, there is a multitude of other ploys to turn to. There are chrysanthemum cuttings to tend, the gentle fires that just keep the frost-wolf from the glass-house door to care for, labels to affix and renew, leaf moulds to manipulate, alterations to map out with just exactitude against the advent of open weather, and a host of other things—"duties enough and little cares."

Yet, duty apart, and from a sheerly pleasurable point of view, there is much for enjoyment (if only there be sunshine) in the very fastnesses of the frost. You had, maybe, forgotten since last winter what a rare artist he was, that secret craftsman, who works with such marvellous speed, such metrical precision. Even as the low sun undoes his work, there is no unlovely anarchy in the dissolution; falling together again like the jewelled pieces in a kaleidoscope, his masterpieces change their aspect, but not their beauty. It is merely a question of readjustment. His pearls become diamonds glittering from every twig and spray, drops of living fire; the shadow shapes detach themselves on lawn and pathway pinked and patterned out in rime.

And what better could you wish for in the matter of colour than that famous symphony of his in white and

green wrought out upon smooth sward that lies divided betwixt sun and shade?

Signor Frost is no amateur, and although his triumphs undoubtedly claim their tale of victims, he is no more relentless, I dare say, than have been others of his brotherhood from time immemorial. Yet one cannot but regret that most triumphs demand victims, that altar fires must pale and die wanting a sacrifice. The tiny dead wren that I found in the shrubbery this morning, sitting poised and ready for upward flight, with small, sleek head and feathers, and tip-tilted, russet-freckled tail, seemed very minute and pitiful somehow. The round, bright eyes of jet, that death had not yet dulled, looked at me, I thought, with an air of inquisitive innocence, as though in wonder as to why so pretty and perfect a morsel of life should have thus brusquely perished. On the whole, I am satisfied that, for the more part, the garden should keep its own secrets? I have no wish to pry. "He who looks too close may see that he would not," says the old saw, not, I am inclined to think, without reason.

But here, in this Arcady in little of the walled garden, there is scant room for tragedy; it is a microcosm of diminutive disasters and many amenities.

If, however, the serene silence of the white, frost-bound pleasaunce should seem over-insistent, it is but the briefest of journeys to a scene bristling with vivacity. Past the long, sunken lawn, through the green door in the ivied wall, along a thin, irregular footpath that traverses the orchard, then between two tall rows of bare currant bushes, and behold us arrived!

The spacious poultry-yard is all fenced about with blue-green trellis, graced upon the outer side by a high hedge of old Provence and moss-rose bushes, most fragrant and dainty in their season, but inconspicuous to-day. As the barred gate opens, an exultant flurry of hens, fatuously confident of benefits to come, dashes to meet you, and then, finding the hope groundless, disperses again to set once more about the perpetual quest for food. The snow-white, rosy-combed Leghorns make charming notes of colour—so charming, indeed, that there is small wonder the Japanese workers in inlay, and with pencil and brush beside, have so often taken them for motive.

And, for the life of me, I cannot believe these dainty birds unconscious of their decorative aspect; my lord is the most arrant poseur I have seen for many a long day; his crow is arrogance made audible; he does not challenge, but commands admiration of his high coral coronet and elegant plumed tail, arched as haughtily as the neck of any Arab steed; he does, indeed, “stand proudly by”! His delicate seraglio, less aggressively equipped, minces hither and thither with little jerky, punctilious airs, for all the world like a bevy of very fine ladies in a muddy street. None of the other dwellers here flaunt such pretentious claims; but in colour and grouping I find comeliness in all, and more especially in the broad effect.

Whether scattered over the orchard grass or, as now, gathered into motley groups of many patterns and colours, they greatly please the eye.

Golden-brown, red-gold, spangled black, and silver,



A WHITE PLEASURE.



like a Velasquez; jet with emerald sheen, bronze and ivory and copper, they strut and glitter in the sun stuttering their foolish speech, prosecuting their absurd activities. A prosaic sight, if you will, to make such an ado about, but, nevertheless, alert, well-coloured, and brimful of movement and gaiety.

For the poetry of the little commune one turns to its purely ornamental members, who are not concerned with practical usefulness of any sort.

Some of them are bathing in the shallow, stone water-vessel; some, having completed their angelic ablutions, are making elaborate toilets, preening and stretching white breasts and wings to the sun. Others circle in airy flights against the pale blue heaven; but the daintiest party of all is promenading up and down and to and fro upon the frost-veiled rose of the ancient-tiled roofs of their château, sloping steeply upward between thick bowers of ivy.

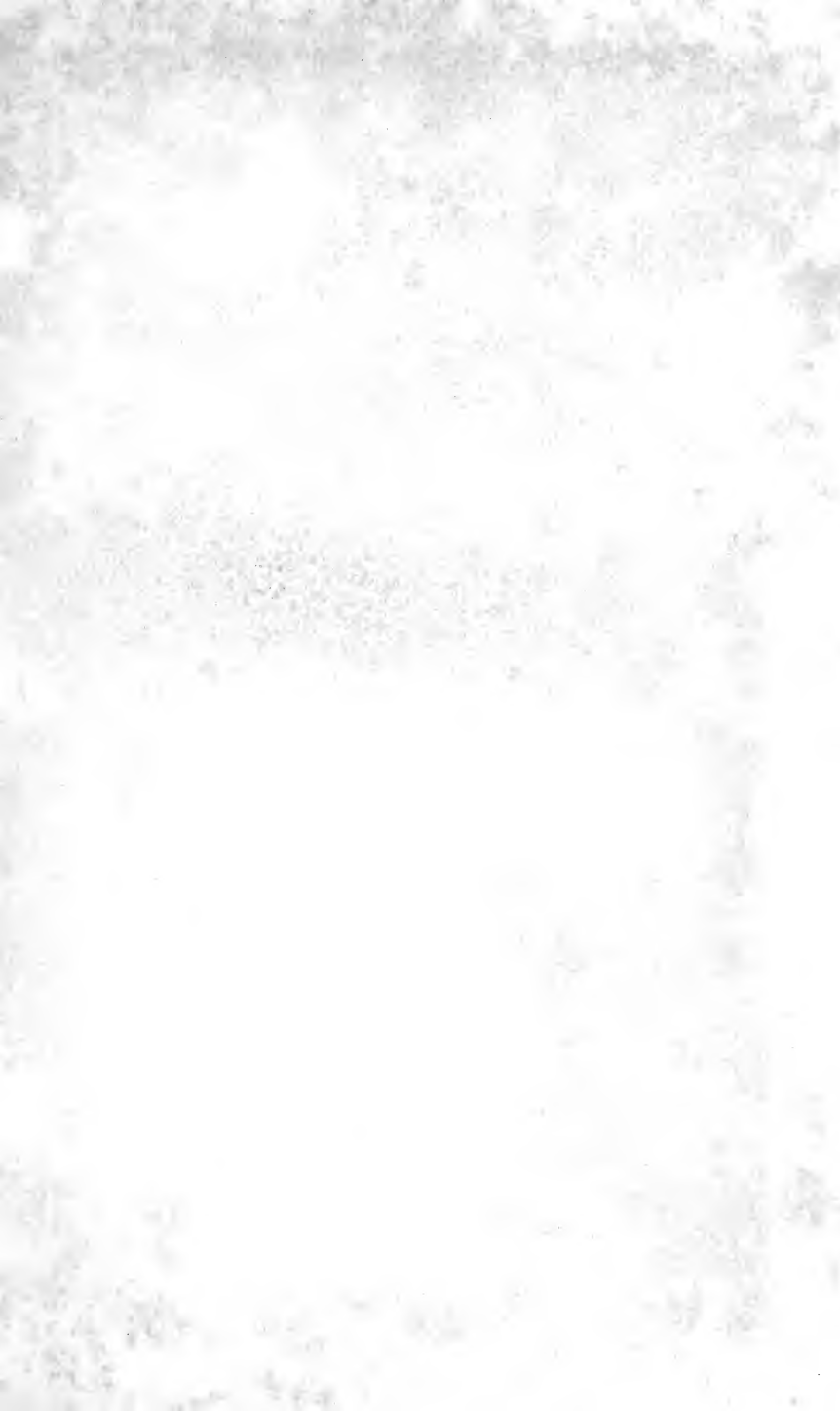
That ivy is a disgrace, I know, and I am really going to have it cut . . . some day. It is incredibly bad for buildings, particularly for aged buildings; and yet, for the moment, let us forget its deleterious powers, and only see it as a romantic background for our white pigeons with the roseate toes.

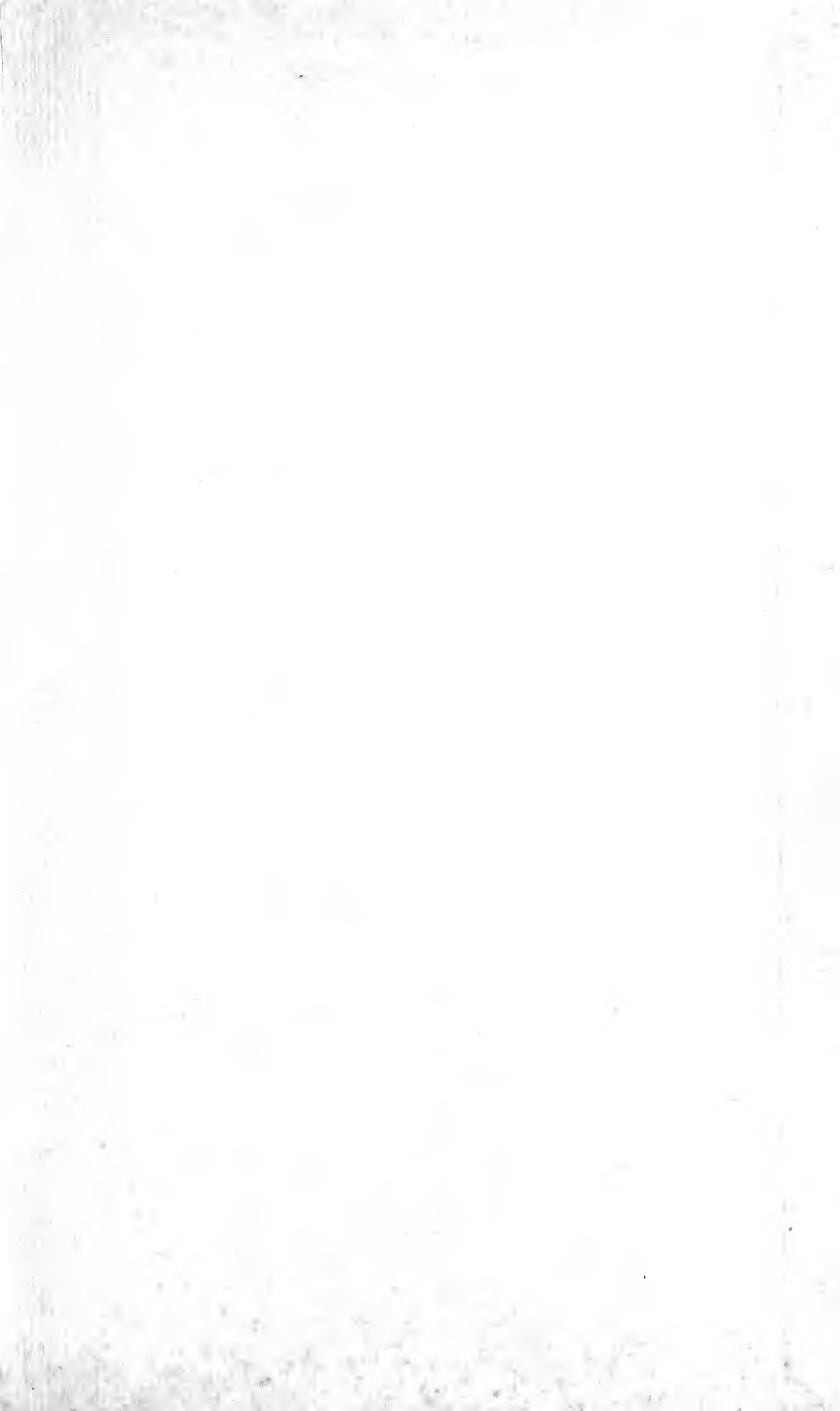
The frost has flung a veil of pearly gauze, light as a cobweb, over glossy clustered leaves and pale florets, so that the pacing birds are seen as in a hanging garden, say, somewhere near the borders of fairyland. As I watch I almost expect them to change before my eyes into the Enchanted Princess and the lords and ladies of her retinue. But, even as we look, rises a sudden alarm;

prolonged, raucous, the voice of an offended female. It is that a matronly lady of the house of Orpington finds her nest already occupied; and although there are a dozen else to choose from, she will have that or none. The white birds swing into the air. There will be no transformation to-day.

So white with frost my garden lies,
So still, so bright, my garden is,
For sure the fields of Paradise
Show not more fair than this:
The streets of pearl, the gates of gold,
Are they, indeed, more peace-posessed
Than this white pleasaunce, pure and cold,
Against an amber West?

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